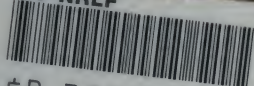


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PICCIOLA



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The
Roxana Lewis Dahney
Memorial

Santa Barbara Normal School
...1913...

Roxana L. Sabney.

May 1904



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PICCIOLA

BY

JOSEPH XAVIER BONIFACE

(KNOWN UNDER THE NAME OF X. B. SAINTINE)

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

BY

ABBY L. ALGER



BOSTON, U.S.A.

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P R E F A C E.



Picciola, the touching story of a prisoner and a flower, is always new and fresh, although it has been reprinted in the original French more than twoscore times, and has been translated into every language of Europe since it first appeared in 1836.

Such success was little expected by its modest author, who wrote it for his own satisfaction alone, but was finally persuaded to print it by a friend, who took up the manuscript by chance and could not lay it down until he had read it through.

Saintine received the Monthyon prize from the French Academy and the ribbon of the Legion of Honor in recognition of the merits of *Picciola*, but these honors did not give him such pleasure as the thought that some real prisoner might find consolation in his book. This hope was fulfilled when Louis Napoleon wrote to him from the fortress of Ham, where he was imprisoned, that *Picciola* had been both a lesson and a solace to him, had shown him that a philosopher has hidden treasures in his heart which may enable him to enjoy happiness under any circumstances.

In his own preface to the work the author says: "My book is neither a drama nor a romance.

"My story is a simple one, so simple that perhaps no writer ever tried his hand on a subject of such narrow limits. My heroine is such a little thing! Not that I would throw the blame on her in advance in case of failure; Heaven forbid! Do you lay any value upon the truth of facts? I assure you that my tale is a true one, and I offer this as some recompense for all that you may miss in it.

"You remember that kind and gracious lady who died not long ago, — the Countess de Charney, — an incredible mixture of sweetness and audacity, of gentleness and resolution; she was a terrible lioness, whom a child could calm with a word; she was a timid dove, capable of enduring tempest and storm to defend her loved ones.

"Such as I knew her, others knew her long before I did. It is with lively pleasure that I tell you of this noble creature; I shall but too seldom have opportunity to speak of her again. She is not the chief heroine of this story.

"During your one visit to her at Belleville, where she made her permanent home, for her husband's tomb is there (and her own, too, now), several things must have struck you as strange. For instance, the presence of a white-haired old man-servant seated beside her at table. You seemed amazed to hear this person, with his uncouth gestures, his common manners, address the daughter of the Countess so familiarly, and to hear the elegant and high-bred young woman, beautiful as her mother before her, answer the old man with deference and respect, calling him godfather; she is indeed his goddaughter.

"Then, perhaps you remember a withered, faded flower, contained in a rich case; and when you asked its history,

do you recall the sad look which swept over the poor widow's face? I think she even let your question go unanswered: it would have taken too long to answer it, and the story could not be told to indifferent ears.

"I will give you your answer now.

"Honored by the affection of that rare woman, I have more than once sat between her and her faithful old servant, face to face with that precious relic, listening to long and detailed accounts which moved me strangely. I have long had in my possession the manuscripts of the Count, his correspondence, and the double journal of his prison, on linen and on paper. I have not lacked documentary proof and historic evidence.

"I treasured those stories in my memory; I studied those manuscripts attentively; I copied precious extracts from that correspondence; from that journal I derived my inspiration, and, if I succeed in transmitting to your soul the emotion which seized me at the sight of all these tokens of the prisoner, I need not fear for the fate of my book.

"One word more. Here are no stirring incidents, no thrilling love tale. And yet there is love in what I am about to relate; but it is only the love of a man for . . . Shall I tell you? . . . No, read, and you will learn."

The supreme lesson of the story, brought out by the author with cumulative skill and force, is the marvellous power of quietude, loneliness, and concentration in developing the affections of the soul. At liberty in the varied intercourse of the world, attention and sympathy scattered fugitively over a thousand shifting objects become careless, superficial, frivolous, and transient. But when one is

shut up in the enforced solitude of a prison, his spirit first recoils upon itself from the dreadful monotony, and then grows conscious of its unfathomable capacity and demand for fellowship. Under these circumstances, give it even the simplest and humblest object around which to entwine the yearning tendrils of its love, and it will idealize that object until it grows divine and calls forth an incredible wealth of devotion. This great truth *Picciola* teaches with a charm equally emphatic and persuasive. This of itself alone lends the work extraordinary value as an educational influence of the highest moral order.

A. L. A.

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PICCIOLA.



BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

COUNT CHARLES VERAMONT DE CHARNEY, whose name is doubtless not yet forgotten by the learned men of our time, and might, if need were, be found inscribed in the books of the imperial police,¹ was born with a vast facility for learning; but his noble intellect, trained in the schools, had acquired the habit of discussion. He argued far more than he observed. In short, he was better adapted for a philosopher than a scientist.

When he was twenty-five years old, he was complete master of seven languages. Unlike many worthy polyglots who seem to have labored to acquire various idioms merely to display their ignorance and inanity to foreigners as well as to their fellow-countrymen (for a man may be a fool in several languages), Count Charney made use of these preparatory studies as stepping-stones to others far more important.

If he had many servants in the employ of his intelligence, at least each of them had his own duties, his

¹ Referring to the period from 1804 to 1814, reign of Napoleon I.

especial charge, his particular fields to till.¹ With the Germans, he devoted himself to metaphysics; with the English and Italians, to politics and legislation; with all, to history, which he could question by going back to its first sources, thanks to the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans.

He accordingly devoted himself wholly to these grave speculations, by no means neglecting the sister sciences which relate to them. But soon, dismayed by the ever-widening horizon, stumbling at every step in the labyrinthine maze upon which he had entered, wearied by the vain pursuit of a doubtful truth, he ceased to regard history as anything but a huge traditional lie, and strove to reconstruct it upon new bases. He merely wrote one more romance, which scholars ridiculed from envy, and the world from ignorance.

Political and legislative science offered him something more positive; but it seemed to call for so many reforms in Europe! And when he tried to point out some which might be made, he found abuses so ineradicable a part of the social structure, so many existences were dependent upon a false principle, that he lost courage, feeling that he had neither the strength nor the lack of feeling needed to overturn in other lands what the stress and storm of revolution² had failed to destroy in France.

Then, how many worthy people, with the same light and with the same good intentions, had theories wholly opposed to his! What if he were to set the whole world by the ears for a doubt! This thought troubled him even

¹ Refers to the seven languages he had mastered as so many servants.

² Revolution of 1789.

more than the aberrations of history, and left him in a state of painful perplexity.

There remained metaphysics.

The world of ideas — where he thought no one's repose need be disturbed — and he lost his own.

The deeper he plunged into its depths, analyzing, discussing, and arguing, the more obscure and confusing all became to him. The unattainable truth, always evading his approach, vanished before him and seemed to hover mockingly above him like a will-of-the-wisp, drawing him on only to lead him astray.

Hesitating between Bossuet and Spinoza,¹ between deism and atheism, urged in different directions by spiritualists, epicureans, animists, autologists, eclectics, and materialists, he was seized with an immense doubt which he desperately solved by a complete negation.

Chance became his God, nothingness his hope!

He clung to this system with rapture, almost with pride, as if he had himself created it, feeling happy, in the midst of his incredulity, to be rid of all the doubts which had besieged him.

The death of a relative left him possessor of a large fortune. He bade farewell to learning and resolved to live for pleasure alone.

After the coming into office of the consular government, French society was put upon a new footing of luxury and splendor. Amidst the trumpet blasts of victory heard on every hand, all was wild delight in Paris.

Charney went into society, rich, fashionable society,

¹ Between belief and unbelief. Bossuet, a French bishop, 1627-1704. Spinoza, a Dutch metaphysician, 1632-1677.

amiable, brilliant society, the society of grace and wit and intellect ; then in the centre of this whirl of idle and yet busy life, of this mad chase after pleasure, he was amazed to find that he was not happy.

He had tried to be intimate with men famed for their learning and their good sense ; but how weak, ignorant, and full of errors he found them ! He pitied them.

This is one of the worst inconveniences of an excess of human knowledge ; you find no one on a level with you ; even those who know as much as you do, do not know it in the same way. From the height which you have reached, you see other men below you, weak and insignificant ; for in the hierarchy of intellect, as in that of power, solitude is the result of greatness.

To live alone is the punishment of those who aspire to too great heights !

Our philosopher appealed more and more freely to material and positive enjoyments. In that society just springing to life again, so long deprived of pleasures and parties, still bearing the marks of the bloody struggles of the revolution, and which, trailing behind its shreds and tatters of Roman virtues, at a single bound outdid the gorgeous orgies of the regency,¹ he made himself conspicuous by the exaggeration of his expenditures, his lavish extravagance, his follies. Fruitless efforts !

He had horses, carriages, an open table ; he gave concerts, balls, and hunting parties ; and nowhere could he find pleasure !

* * * * *

¹ Period during the minority of Louis XV, from 1715-1723, when Philip, Duke of Orleans, was Regent — a period of corruption and extravagance.

Charney could find happiness neither in truth nor in error. To virtue he was averse, to vice indifferent.

He had sounded the vanity of learning, and happy ignorance was forbidden him. The gates of that Eden were forever closed behind him.

The bustle of society wearied him ; solitude and silence were painful to him.

In company, others bored him ; alone, he bored himself. Profound melancholy took possession of him.

Philosophic analysis, in spite of his efforts to avoid it, ruled his thoughts and, destroying all illusion, tarnished, dwarfed, and destroyed the pleasures and luxury amid which he fain would live. The praises of his friends ceased to be anything but the current coin in which they paid for the share they took in his wealth, and merely showed their desire to secure at his expense a seat at the table with the fortunate of the earth.

He was stricken with a dreadful disease, and yet one more common than we might think — one which attacks the proud to humble them.

In the fine texture of his clothes he seemed to smell the foul odor of the animal which furnished the wool. In the silk of his rich hangings he saw the loathsome worm which spun it. His elegant furniture, his carpets, his books, his silver and ivory toys, all seemed to him mere cast-off skins and refuse. Death, Death set off and fashioned by the sweat of a dirty artisan.

His illusions were gone, his imagination paralyzed.

And yet he must have sensations at any cost !

The love which he could not fix on a single object he strove to lavish on an entire nation.

He became a philanthropist !

To help mankind, whom he despised, he again threw himself into politics, not speculative politics now, but active politics. He was initiated into secret societies ; he strove to feel that sort of fanaticism which may befit disillusioned spirits. In short, he conspired ! And against whom ? Against the power of Bonaparte.

Perhaps the patriotic love, the universal love which seemed to inspire him, may really have been nothing more than hatred for a single man, for a man whose glory and success disturbed him.

The aristocratic Charney fell back upon the principles of equality ; the proud gentleman, stripped of the title inherited from his ancestors, could not endure another to assume with impunity the title of emperor, which he had only won at the point of the sword.

What was the conspiracy ? It matters not.

There was no lack of conspiracies at that time. I only know that it smouldered from 1803 to 1804 ; but it was never permitted to break forth ; the police, the secret providence watching over the destinies of the coming empire, exposed it betimes and did not see fit to make any stir about it, nor think it worthy of a military execution on the plains of Grenoble.¹

The leaders of the conspiracy, taken by surprise, arrested in their own houses, condemned almost unheard, were scattered among the prisons, citadels, or fortresses of the ninety-six departments of France.

¹ Now included in the limits of Paris ; formerly a small village where military executions took place.

CHAPTER II.

I REMEMBER that as I crossed the Greek Alps,¹ on my way to Italy, travelling on foot, my knapsack on my back and my alpenstock in my hand, I paused musingly to gaze on a torrent, not far from the Col de Rodovetto, swollen by the melting glaciers.

The roar of its waters, the foaming cascades along its course, its various hues, now yellow, now white, and now black, showed that it had made its way through layers of marlstone, limestone, and slate; the huge blocks of marble and flint which it had laid bare, but not uprooted, formed so many cataracts, added a different note to all the other tones, fresh cascades to all the other cascades; the branches of drifting trees, half out of the water, were on the one side torn by the wind, which was blowing violently, and on the other twisted by the leaping waves. Clods of earth, still covered with verdure, islets wrested from the banks, floated on the surface of the torrent and were dashed to pieces against the trees, as the trees in turn were dashed against the boulders. All this uproar and confusion, the various sights and sounds, compressed within two lofty steep banks, held me for some time a prey to meditation.

This torrent was the Clusare.²

I wandered along its banks, and in its company I reached one of the four valleys known as Protestant, in

¹ A portion of the Alps extending from Mont Cenis to Mont Blanc.

² One of the minor affluents of the Po.

memory of the Waldenses,¹ who once took refuge there. My torrent had now lost its rapid, lawless course and its roaring, brawling voices. It ran smoother, it had left its trees and islets by the way; its colors had melted and blended into a single tint, and the mud from its bed no longer clouded its surface. Still flowing swiftly, but smoothly, it assumed the aspect of a peaceful river to caress with its waves the walls of Fenestrella.

Before me was Fenestrella, a large town famed for its peppermint, and still more for the forts which crown the two mounts upon which the town lies. These forts, which communicate by means of covered ways,² were partly dismantled during the wars of the republic; one of them, however, repaired and revictualled, was made a state prison when Piedmont became a part of France.

In this very fort, at Fenestrella, Charles Veramont, Count de Charney, was confined, accused of an attempt to overthrow the regular and lawful government of his country, and to substitute a reign of disorder and terror.

Behold him now, parted alike from scholars and pleasure seekers, regretting neither, forgetting without much regret the hope of political regeneration which had for a moment seemed to kindle his weary soul; bidding a forced farewell, but one full of resignation, to his fortune, all whose splendors could not dazzle him; to his friends who loved him or deceived him; his abode, instead of his

¹ Vaudois or Waldenses, a religious sect, so called from their founder, Pierre de Vaux, born near Lyons in 1170. In 1689 they sought shelter in Piedmont.

² Passages protected from shot by a breastwork of earth, gabions or sandbags.

spacious and elegant house, a bare and gloomy cell, his gaoler for his only servant.

What does he care for the gloom and poverty of his home? All that is strictly necessary is there, and he is tired of superfluities. Even his gaoler seems to him tolerable.

His thoughts alone oppress him.

And yet what other diversion is left him?

All communication with the outside world is forbidden him. He has not, nor can he have, either books, pen, or paper. Such are the rules of the prison.

This would have been no privation to him once, when his only idea was to evade the scientific doubts which besieged him. Now, a book would have given him a friend to consult; nay, more, a foe to combat. Aloof from the world, he was forced to fall back upon himself, to live with his enemy—with his thoughts.

But how bitter and how oppressive are those thoughts which never cease to remind him of his desperate position! How dull and cold for him, for him upon whom Nature once lavished her gifts, whom society surrounded from his birth with favors and privileges; for him now a wretched captive; for him who has such need of protection and help, and who has no faith either in the power of God or the pity of man!

He tries again to free himself from that demon of argumentation which alternately freezes and inflames him. Once more he strives to live with the external world, in the material world. But how narrow are now the limits of that world for him!

The cell occupied by Count de Charney was in the rear of the fortress, in a small building constructed upon the

ruins of an ancient stronghold, formerly a part of the defence of the fortress, but now made unnecessary by newer fortifications.

Four walls freshly whitewashed, where he could find no trace of those who had occupied this place of desolation before him ; a table upon which he could do nothing but eat ;¹ a chair, whose painful unity seemed to warn him that no human being would ever sit beside him there ; a box for his clothes ; a small sideboard of painted pine, half worm-eaten, upon which, in strange contrast, lay a rich dressing case, inlaid with silver (the only relic of his former splendor) ; a bed, narrow but clean ; a couple of blue cotton curtains, which hung at the window, as if in mockery ; for considering the size of the iron bars and the high wall opposite, which rose ten feet in the air, there was no cause to fear either curious glances or the oppressive rays of the sun ; such was the furniture of his room.

Above this room there was another, precisely like his, but empty, unoccupied ; for he had no companions in this detached part of the fortress.

The rest of his universe was limited to a short and massive stone staircase, winding down to a tiny paved courtyard, constructed in one of the old moats of the citadel.

This was the place where, for two hours a day, he was allowed to take such exercise and to enjoy such liberty as the rules laid down by the commanding officer permitted.

Thence the prisoner could see the mountain peaks and the mists which rose from the plains ; for the outworks of the fortress, falling away abruptly to the east of the court-

¹ Having no books or writing materials.

yard, allowed sun and air to enter. But once inside his room, a horizon of masonry alone met his gaze in the midst of the sublime and picturesque scenery by which he was surrounded. On his right bloomed the enchanted slopes of Saluces;¹ on his left were the valleys of Aosta and the banks of the Chiara; before him lay the wondrous plains of Turin; behind him the Alps rose peak above peak, decked with rocks, forests, and chasms, from Mont Genève to Mont Cenis, and he saw nothing; nothing but a hazy sky hanging above his head in a framework of stones; nothing but that lofty wall opposite, whose wearisome monotony was only broken towards the end of it by one small square window, through the bars of which from time to time he caught a glimpse of a sad and sullen face.

Such was the limited world where he was henceforth to seek his amusements and find his joys.

He struggled hard to do so.

He scribbled, he scrawled in charcoal on the walls of his room, figures and dates which reminded him of happy incidents of his youth; but how few they were! These memories did but leave him more down-hearted than ever.

Then his fatal demon, his thoughts, returned with their distressing convictions and he shaped them into maxims which he did not hesitate to scratch upon his walls, side by side with the names of his mother and sister.

Longing at last to overcome his morbid abstraction and his overwhelming idleness, he strove to adapt himself to frivolous and childish things; he yielded to the sluggishness produced by prolonged imprisonment; he revelled in it, he wallowed in it with rapture.

¹ A town of Northern Italy.

The scholar unravelled linen and silk !

The philosopher made reed pipes ; he built men-of-war of nutshells !

The man of genius made whistles, carved boxes and openwork baskets of fruit stones ! The revolutionist made chains and musical instruments of the wire springs¹ in his braces !

Then he fell to admiring himself in his works ; then, soon after, he was seized with disgust, and he trampled them all underfoot.

To vary his occupations, he carved a thousand odd figures on his table.

Never did schoolboy hack his desk, or load it with arabesques, in high and low relief, with more skill and patience. The church at Caudebec,² the pulpit and palm trees of St. Gudule, the cathedral at Brussels, are not adorned with a greater profusion of figures on wood. There were houses upon houses, fishes upon trees, men taller than the steeples, boats upon roofs, carriages in the middle of a lake, dwarfed pyramids, and giant flies ; all this, horizontal, vertical, oblique, upside down, topsy-turvy, pell-mell, a hieroglyphic chaos, where he sometimes struggled to find a symbolic meaning, a sequence, a plot ; for one who had such firm faith in the power of chance might well hope to find a perfect poem in the scratches upon his table, like a drawing by Raphael³ on the mottled rims of a bit of boxwood.

¹ Elastic had not then been invented.

² A small town in the department of lower Seine, with a church in the florid style of the fifteenth century.

³ Raphael, great Italian painter, born at Urbino 1483, died 1520.

He thus tried his best to multiply the difficulties to be overcome, the problems to be solved, the riddles to be guessed, and yet tedium, dread tedium, surprised him in the midst of all these grave cares !

The man whose face he had seen at the end of the high wall might perhaps have afforded him more genuine diversion ; but this fellow-prisoner appeared to shun his gaze, withdrawing from his grating as soon as the Count seemed to look at him with any attention. Charney at once took an aversion to him.

He had so poor an opinion of mankind that this movement to retreat was all that was needed to make him think that the unknown was a spy charged to watch him even in the leisure of his prison, or an ancient enemy enjoying his misery and disgrace.

When he questioned the gaoler on this point, the latter tried to undeceive him.

"That is an Italian," he said ; "a good fellow, a good Christian, for I often find him saying his prayers."

Charney shrugged his shoulders.

"And why is he here ?" he asked.

"He tried to kill the emperor."

"So he is a patriot ?"

"A patriot ? oh ! no ; but the poor man had a son and a daughter ; he has only a daughter now ; and his son died in Germany. . . . A cannon ball carried off his head. *Povero figliuolo !*"¹

"Then it was only an outburst of egotism !" muttered Charney.

"Zounds ! you are not a father, *Signor Conte*," said the

¹ Poor lad.

gaoler. "If I had to choose between my little Antonio, who is still at his mother's breast, and the empire, which is just about the same age as he is. . . . *Cristo santo!* But silence, I don't want to live at Fenestrella except with the keys at my belt or under my pillow."

"And what are the present occupations of this bold conspirator?"

"He catches flies," said the gaoler with a semi-jocose expression.

Charney no longer hated his neighbor; he despised him.

"Is he crazy?" he exclaimed.

"*Perchè pazzo*,¹ Count? You came here more recently than he did, and you are already a master-hand at wood carving. *Pazienza!*"²

In spite of the irony contained in these last words, Charney resumed his manual labors and the explanation of his hieroglyphics, remedies which were still of no avail against the evils which tormented him.

Amid these trifling occupations, amid these trials, the winter wore away.

Happily for him a new subject of diversion soon came to his aid.

¹ Why crazy.

² Wait awhile.

CHAPTER III.

ONE day, at the set hour, Charney was walking in his courtyard, his head bent, his arms crossed behind his back, pacing slowly, softly up and down, as if to enlarge the narrow limits which he was permitted to traverse.

Springtime was at hand ; a gentler air filled his lungs, and he longed to be at liberty, to be free to come and go.

He was counting the paving stones of the little yard one by one, no doubt to make sure of the correctness of his former calculations, for it was not by any means the first time that he had counted them, when he saw, there, directly in front of him, before his eyes, a tiny hillock of earth slightly upheaved between two paving stones and gaping wide at the top.

He paused and his heart beat ; he knew not why. But to a prisoner everything is cause for hope or fear ! In the most indifferent objects, the most insignificant event, he seeks some miraculous reason which may lead to his rescue.

Perhaps this slight upheaval of the surface may be caused by some vast works in the bowels of the earth ! There may be passageways underground which will open and make a road for him to pass through fields and mountains ! Perhaps his friends or his former accomplices are sapping and mining¹ to get at him and restore him to life and liberty !

¹ "Sap," open trenches on the surface of the ground. "Mine," underground galleries. Both are used when approaching a fortified place, regularly besieged.

He listens eagerly, and fancies he hears a dull, long-drawn sound from the centre of the fortress; he lifts his head, and the air in commotion bears to him the rapid strokes of an alarm bell. The roll of drums runs along the ramparts, as a signal for war. He shudders and presses a quivering hand to his forehead, which is moist with apprehension.

Is he really to be set free? Has France changed masters?

The dream lasted but a second. Reflection dispelled the illusion. He had no accomplices now, and never had a friend! He listens again; the same sounds strike his ear, but they awaken other thoughts. The sound of the alarm bell, the roll of the drum are only the far-off strokes of a church clock which he hears every day at the same hour, and the customary call to arms, which need startle none but a few laggard soldiers within the fortress.

Charney smiled bitterly, and pitied himself when he thought that an insignificant creature, a mole, astray from his road no doubt, a field mouse scratching the earth beneath his feet, had led him to put faith for one moment in human affection and the overthrow of the great empire!

However, he resolved to settle the question, and kneeling beside the little mound, he delicately removed with his finger tip first one side of the divided summit, then the other; and he saw with amazement that the swift and fierce emotion which had overcome him for an instant was not even caused by a living creature, moving, scratching, armed with teeth and claws, but by a feeble growth, barely sprouted, colorless and drooping.

Rising deeply mortified, he was about to tread it underfoot when a cool breeze, which had passed over bushes of honeysuckle and hawthorn, fanned him, as if imploring mercy for the poor plant, which, too, might perhaps some day have sweet perfumes to bestow.

A fresh thought struck him and arrested his hasty feeling of disappointment.

How had that tender, delicate plantlet, so fragile that a touch would destroy it, managed to lift up, divide, and cast aside that soil baked and hardened by the sun, trodden down by himself, and almost cemented to the two fragments of stone between which it was confined?

He again stooped and studied it more carefully.

He saw at its tip a sort of double fleshy valve, which, folding over the first leaves, protected them from the attack of any hostile body and enabled them to pierce the crust of earth in search of sunshine and air.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "here we have the whole secret! Nature has provided it with this power, just as little chickens, before they are hatched, are already armed with a beak strong enough to break the thick shell that contains them. Poor prisoner, in your captivity you at least possessed tools which might help to set you free!"

He gazed at it for some moments more, and no longer dreamed of destroying it.

Next day, during his usual walk, striding to and fro, lost in thought, he almost stepped on it, and stopped short. Surprised at the interest which he felt in his new acquaintance, he noted its progress.

The plant had grown, and the rays of the sun had done away with much of that sickly pallor which it had on first

emerging from the ground. He considered that sickly stunted stalk's power of absorbing the rays of light, of feeding on them, deriving nourishment from them, and borrowing from the prison the colors in which it clothes itself, colors pre-assigned to each of its parts.

"Yes, its leaves, no doubt," he thought, "will be a different color from the stem; and then the flowers! What color will they be, yellow, blue, or red? Why, being fed with the same juices as the leaves and stem, should they not wear the same livery? How can they find their blue and scarlet where the others could find only dark or light green? And yet such will be the case; for in spite of the confusion and disorder of things in general, matter follows a regular course, blind though it be. Blind, indeed!" he repeated; "I could ask no better proof than those two fleshy lobes which helped the plant to issue from the earth, but which now, useless to preserve it, still feed upon its substance and hang down loosely, wearying it with their weight. What are they good for?"

As he spoke, and as night was close at hand, a spring night, and likely to be chilly, the two lobes slowly lifted before his eyes, and as if to defend themselves against his reproaches they drew together and enclosed within their bosom, to protect it against cold and the attacks of insects, the tender, delicate foliage which the sun was now deserting, and which thus, sheltered and warm, slept beneath the wings which the plant had gently folded over it.

The learned man appreciated this silent but decisive reply more fully when he saw that the outer surface of

the vegetable bivalve had been gnawed and nibbled, the night before, by small slugs whose slimy traces could still be seen.

This strange conversation between thought on the one hand and action on the other, between the man and the plant, was not to end here. Charney had not given so much time to metaphysical discussion to yield so readily.

"All very well," he replied; "here, as elsewhere, a lucky combination of circumstances has favored this feeble creature. Born with a crowbar to lift the earth, and a shield to protect its head, it had two requisites for existence; without them, this plant must have died in its germ, like so many myriads of its kind, no doubt made by Nature imperfect, incomplete, unfit to grow and multiply, having but an hour to live.

"How can we tell how many faulty and impotent combinations she has tried before she succeeded in bringing forth a single specimen fitted to endure? A blind man may hit the mark; but how many arrows must be lost before that result is reached! For thousands of ages a double movement of attraction and repulsion has been going on in matter; is it not therefore strange that chance should hit the mark so often? I admit that this envelope may protect the first leaves; but will it grow, will it increase to shelter and protect the other leaves as well, against the cold and the attacks of their enemies? No! Next spring, when other leaves put forth, as tender, as frail as these, will it be there to protect them? No! thus there is no foresight here; this is not the work of intelligent thought, but rather of some happy chance!"

Sir Count, Nature has more than one answer in reserve to refute your arguments. Wait and watch her in this frail and solitary product of her hands, cast into the courtyard of your prison, in the midst of your sorrows, perhaps less by accident than by the kindly prevision of Providence. Those excrescences, which you yourself have already discovered to be a crowbar and a shield, have rendered other services as well to the feeble plant. Wrapping it warmly in the frozen earth through the winter, when the proper time came they nourished and fed it, when, a mere germ, it had as yet no roots to send forth in search of the earth's moisture, no leaves to breathe in air and sunshine.

You are right, Count; those protecting wings which now brood so lovingly over the young plant will not grow with its growth; they will drop off, but not before their work is done and their nursling, having gained strength to resist, can do without them. Do not fear for its future; Nature watches over this weed as she does over its sister plants; and so long as the north winds bring down chill mists and snowflakes from the Alps, the young leaves will find safe shelter, a refuge prepared for them, shielded from contact with the air, made impervious with gums and resins, expanding with their needs, and only opening at propitious times and seasons. The leaves will not peep forth until they are clad in warm furs, in fleecy down which will protect them from the late frosts and atmospheric changes.

Did any mother ever watch more lovingly over her children? These things you would have known long since, Sir Count, if, stooping from the abstract regions

of human knowledge, you had ever deigned to lower your gaze to the simple, humble works of God. The farther you turned toward the north, the more apparent these everyday miracles would be to you. As danger increases, Providence redoubles his care !

The philosopher had attentively followed all the changes and growth of the plant. Once more he had striven against it in argument, and again it had an apt answer for everything !

"What is the use of those bristles up and down your stem ?" he asked.

And next day he found them laden with hoarfrost, which, thanks to them, was kept at a distance and could not chill the tender rind.

"What will you do in fine weather with your warm mantle of down ?"

Fine weather had come, and she laid aside her winter cloak before his very eyes, and put on her green spring dress, and her new twigs sprang to life without those silky wrappers, which were now unnecessary.

"But if a storm should burst, the wind will break you, and the hail will tear your tender leaves into pieces !"

The wind blew, and the young plant, still far too frail to contend against it, bowed to the earth, protecting herself by yielding. The hail came, and by a fresh manœuvre, the leaves, closing in against the stalk for shelter, pressed together for mutual protection, opposing only their reverse to the blows of the enemy, and opposing their firm ribs to the weight of the storm king's missiles ; union was strength ; now, as heretofore, the plant issued from the conflict, not without trifling injuries, but still hale and

hearty, and ready to expand in the sun, which would heal her wounds.

"Can chance be intelligent?" cried Charney; "are we to regard matter as spiritual, or mind as material?" And he continued to question the silent speaker; he loved to see her grow and to follow her in her gradual changes.

One day, when he had studied her for a long time, he caught himself lost in dreams beside her, and his dreams were of unwonted sweetness, and he was glad to go on with them as he paced up and down the courtyard. Then, lifting his head, he saw at the barred window in the wall the "flycatcher," who seemed to be watching him. At first he blushed, as if that man could read his thoughts, and then he smiled at him, for he no longer despised him. Had he any right to do so? Was not he, too, wholly absorbed in the study of one of the smallest creations of nature?

"Who knows," he mused, "whether that Italian may not have discovered in a fly as many things worthy of consideration as I have found in my plant?"

On his return to his room the first thing which caught his eye was that fatalistic axiom inscribed by him on the wall two months before:

"Chance is blind, and it alone is the father of the creation."

He took a piece of charcoal and wrote below:

"Perhaps."

CHAPTER IV.

CHARNEY no longer wrote upon his wall ; he carved on his table nothing but young shoots protected by their seed lobes, leaves with their varied outlines and their salient ribs. He spent the greater part of his hours of exercise bending over his plant, examining it, studying its growth ; and on his return to his cell, he often stood and gazed at it through the bars.

This was now his favorite occupation — the prisoner's toy, his hobby. Would he weary of this as readily as of all the rest ?

One morning from his window he saw the gaoler, crossing the yard with a hasty step, pass so near the plant that it seemed as if he must have crushed it with his foot. The prisoner shuddered at the thought.

When Ludovic brought him his scanty breakfast, he tried to implore him to spare the only ornament of his daily walk ; but he knew not how to frame his modest request.

Perhaps the sanitary rules of the prison demanded the removal of that vegetable parasite ; so that he might be asking a favor, and he had but little with which to pay for that which he valued so highly. Ludovic had already fleeced him desperately, overcharging him for all the trifles which the gaoler is allowed to furnish the prisoners ! Besides, until now Charney had but seldom spoken to the fellow, whose abrupt manners and sordid nature repelled him. No doubt the gaoler would be ill-disposed to gratify

him. Then his pride suffered at the idea of showing his tastes to be on a level, or very nearly so, with those of the "flycatcher," his contempt for whom he had declared so openly. And finally he might meet with a refusal; for the inferior, whose office gives him the temporary right to permit or refuse, almost always makes a cruel use of his power; he does not know that indulgence is a proof of strength.

A refusal would wound the noble prisoner alike in his hopes and in his pride.

Accordingly, it was not without countless oratoric precautions, or until he had fortified himself with his philosophic knowledge of human weaknesses, that Charney began his address, carefully arranged in his head, so that he might achieve his end without compromising his self-respect or, rather, his vanity.

He began by addressing the gaoler in Italian; this was meant to arouse his memories of childhood and nationality. He spoke of his son, his little Antonio; he knew how to appeal to his weak point and compel him to listen; then, taking a silver-gilt cup from his elegant dressing case, he begged him to give it to the child from him.

Ludovic smiled and refused.

Charney, although somewhat discouraged, did not admit that he was defeated. He insisted, and with a skilful transition: "I know," he said, "that playthings, a rattle, a few flowers, would perhaps please him better; but you can sell this cup, my good fellow, and use the money to buy what you like for him."

He then came out with a: "*But, speaking of flowers!*" which brought him to his subject.

Thus patriotism, parental love, childish memories, personal interest, those great incentives of humanity, were all used by him to attain his ends. What more could he have done had his own fate been at stake? Judge whether he loved his plant!

"Count," said Ludovic when he paused, "keep your *nacchera dorata*;¹ the other jewels in your pretty box would mourn its absence. You forget that my *caro bambino*² is only three months old and can as yet drink without a goblet. As for your gillyflower—"

"What, a gillyflower! Is it a gillyflower?" cried Charney, foolishly disappointed to find that he had lavished such care on so ordinary a flower.

"Odd zounds! I know nothing about it, *Signor Conte*. To my eyes all plants are more or less gillyflowers; I know nothing about such things. But if it comes to that, you are rather late in recommending it to my mercy. I should have trampled it down long ago, with no idea of hurting either you or the fair one in question,³ if I had not seen the tender interest you take in it."

"Oh! my interest," said Charney, somewhat embarrassed, "is easily explained."

"Tut, tut, tut, I know what I am talking about," replied Ludovic, trying to wink knowingly; "a man must have some occupation; he must have something to love; and a poor prisoner has not much choice. I can tell you, Count, we have lodgers here who were very fine gentlemen in their day, tiptop scholars (for it is not the small fry that come here); well! they put up with cheap amusements now, I assure you. One of them catches flies;

¹ Gilded toy.

² Dear little boy.

³ The plant.

another," he added with another wink which he tried to make even more significant than the first, "another hacks out pictures on his pine table without ever considering that I am responsible for the furniture here."

The Count tried to get in a word, but was not allowed.

"Some raise canaries and goldfinches, some train little white mice. As for me, I respect their tastes, and to such an extent, bless you! that I had a magnificent cat, a huge fellow with long white hair, a real Angora; he ran about and played and was the prettiest thing in the world, and when he took his nap you would have taken him for a lady's muff; my wife was just crazy over him, and so was I; and yet I gave him away, for that small game might tempt him; and all the cats in the world are not worth one mouse to a prisoner!"

"That was very good of you, Mr. Ludovic," replied Charney, feeling ill at ease that any one should fancy he cared for such childish things; "but this plant is more than a mere amusement to me."

"Never mind! If it do but remind you of the green tree under which your mother rocked you when you were little, by Jove! it may shade half the courtyard. Besides, there is not a word about such things in the rules, and I shall keep my eyes shut. If it should grow into a tree and you could use it to scale the wall, that would be a very different matter! But there's plenty of time to consider that, is n't there?" he added with a hearty laugh; "not that I don't wish with my whole heart that I could give you the key to the fields and the free use of your legs; but that will come in due time, according to rule and law,

with official permission. Oh ! if you were to try to escape from the fortress — ”

“ What should you do ? ”

“ What should I do ? Thunder ! I should block your way even if you were to kill me ; or I would order the sentinel to shoot you, with no more mercy than if you were a rabbit ; those are my orders. But as for touching a single leaf of your gillyflower ! Oh ! no, no ! Put my foot on it ! Never ! I have always considered that man an utter wretch, unworthy to be a gaoler, who maliciously crushed the poor prisoner’s spider.¹ That was a wicked deed ; it was a crime ! ”

Charney was both touched and surprised to find so much feeling in his gaoler ; but for the very reason that he began to esteem him a little more, his vanity persisted in ascribing to scientific motives the interest which he took in the plant.

“ My dear Mr. Ludovic,” said he, “ I thank you for your kind words. Yes, I admit that this plant is the source of many observations — philosophic observations which are full of interest. I love to study its physiological phenomena.” And as the gaoler showed by a nod that he heard but did not understand, he added : “ Moreover, the species to which it belongs, possesses medicinal properties very beneficial in certain serious ailments to which I am subject ! ”

He lied ; but it would have cost him too much to admit that he had sunk to the childish whims of ordinary prisoners to this man who had just risen a degree in his opinion —

¹ An allusion to Pelissier and his tame spider, on which the governor of the Bastille cruelly trod.

the only person who ever came near him, and who now, to him, summed up all mankind.

"Well, if your plant has done you so much good, Count," replied Ludovic, turning to leave the room, "you ought to show yourself more grateful to it and water it sometimes; for if I had not taken pains to wet it now and then when I brought you your supply of drinking water, the *povera Picciola* (the poor little thing) would have died of thirst. *Addio, Signor Conte!*"

"One moment, my good Ludovic!" cried Charney, more and more surprised to find such delicate instincts contained in so rude a frame, and almost repenting that he had not appreciated them before. "What! you take heed for my pleasure and you said nothing to me! Ah! I implore you, accept this little present as a token of my gratitude. If later on I can pay my debt to you more fully, rely on me."

And he again offered him the silver-gilt cup. Ludovic took it, and, examining it with a sort of curiosity:

"Pay me for what, *Signor Conte*? Plants ask for nothing but water, and a man may treat them to drink without spending all he has at the tavern. If it diverts you *un poco*¹ from your troubles, if it bears good fruit for you, that is enough."

And he replaced the cup in the dressing case.

The Count stepped towards Ludovic and offered him his hand.

"Oh! no, no," said the gaoler, drawing back with a look of respect and constraint. "You should only give your hand to your equal or your friend."

¹ A little.

"Well! Ludovic, be my friend!"

"No, no," repeated the gaoler, "that may not be, *eccellenza*.¹ We should always think beforehand, so that we may do our duty conscientiously, now and in the future. If you were my friend, and you tried to give us the slip, should I have the courage to shout to the sentinel, 'Fire' ? No, I am your keeper, your gaoler, and *divotissimo servo*."²

¹ Your worship.

² Most obedient servant.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Ludovic had gone, Charney reflected how superior he, with his personal advantages, had always held himself to this rough fellow in all their intercourse. To what paltry subterfuges he had had recourse to surprise the heart of that simple, kindly nature! He had not blushed to stoop to a lie!

How grateful he was for the secret attentions lavished on his plant! What! that gaoler, whom he fancied capable of refusing merely to abstain from an evil act, had even anticipated his wishes! He had watched him, not to mock at his weakness, but to befriend his pleasures, and his generosity forced the noble Count to acknowledge himself his debtor.

The hour for exercise had come, and Charney did not forget to share his portion of water with his plant. Not content with this, he took care to remove the dust which clogged its leaves and the vermin which attacked them.

And while busy with this task he thinks of Ludovic; he longs to know him better, to find an explanation of the strange contrasts afforded by the character of one who was both rough and gentle, merciless and full of pity, miserly and generous.

He who was once so interested in the fall of ancient empires, the migrations of races, the exploits, the conquests of Cyrus, Alexander, and Genghis Khan, now asks nothing of the great world history save the history of his gaoler.

By dint of questions, suppositions, and logical deductions he learned thus much from Ludovic himself.

Ludovic Ritti, a Piedmontese, was born at Nice,¹ the compatriot and contemporary of Masséna.² Children of the same part of the town, schoolmates, and playmates out of school hours, they lived side by side.

But from their earliest youth, in accord with their different characters, if they played horse, Ludovic was the horse and Masséna the driver; if they stole fruit from a neighbor's garden, Ludovic acted as ladder, Masséna climbed the wall and contrived to keep the lion's share; if they went poaching in the woods, Ludovic beat the bushes, and Masséna was the hunter.

Thus the friends grew up together, roamed the world together, together entered the republican army, and together took out their naturalization papers, not in the usual way, by declaring themselves Frenchmen, but by helping France to make their own country hers.

At this time, to be sure, Masséna was a general, while Ludovic still wore his first worsted epaulettes.³ One was born to rule, the other to obey.

Yes, to obey passively, blindly, completely. Such was Ludovic's second nature, his instinctive need. He was a Russian, a mere instrument of war, moving at the pleasure of the hand which guided him. His chief's command to him was like the order of God himself; his movements were so completely in accord with the word of command, that even in the thickest of the fight, even with an enemy's

¹ Chief town in the department of the Maritime Alps.

² A marshal under Napoleon I.

³ As private or noncommissioned officer.

pistol at his head, he would have paused, sword in air, without striking, had a sign proclaimed the close of hostilities.

Although very brave, Ludovic would never be carried away by his ardor, and would not have moved one step from the ranks, either backward or forward. If he never did any great deed during his campaigns, it was merely because it was never ordered.

If his sergeant had offered him a glass of ink instead of his ration of brandy, and said, "Drink it!" he would have swallowed it without wincing.

In the terrible year 1795, amidst the snow of the Alps, when he and his mates marched barefoot and with empty stomachs, if any of them grumbled, Ludovic would say calmly, "But those are our orders."

Severely wounded at Marengo, and slightly crippled by a ball which lodged in the fleshy part of his thigh, he was compelled to retire from service.

Great was his embarrassment. All he had gained by his campaigns and his stay in Germany, Italy, and various parts of France was a wonderful faculty for swearing in four or five different tongues.

Returning to Nice, to his native city, condemned to a sedentary life, his own master, with no guiding hand over him, he was at a loss to direct his movements or to arrange his life.

His only diversion, his only pleasure, his only joy was to watch the garrison drill, and to keep step with them as the guard came on duty or went off.

He went home to bed every night when he heard the tattoo; but the drum no longer sounded for his meals and

for his rising; in the everyday acts of life there was no one to shout, "Right about face! Forward march!" And what could he make of an existence which he must fashion for himself? Obedience is so sweet to indolent spirits! And then habit makes it a necessity.

To put an end to this perplexing situation, Ludovic took a desperate resolve.

He married.

In his home he showed the same passive obedience which had distinguished him in the army. As if all good things were to fall to his lot at once, thanks to his old friend Masséna, the situation of gaoler at Fenestrella, then vacant, was given him. He had thus two commanders instead of one — his wife and his superior officer.

His wife, younger than he, was considered quite a pretty girl when he married her, in spite of a large goitre;¹ but being ill-tempered and extremely avaricious, she compelled Ludovic, who was naturally generous, to fleece the prisoners for all the trifles which he was allowed to furnish them.

However, in spite of his wife's commands, he would never accept the slightest present from them, aside from his functions as purveyor; for this matter being known only within the walls of the prison, and out of his wife's sight, concerned no one but himself; and then, besides, those were his orders.

Thus there were in Ludovic three distinct characteristics, according as he was ruled in turn by his commanding officer, his wife, and his own instincts. Merciless

¹ A swelling of the glands of the throat; a common disease in Alpine regions.

where the prison discipline was concerned, here his superior officer came into play ; grasping with the prisoners here his wife's hand showed ; but a good fellow, kindly, generous, and compassionate, where the commander or the mistress of his house did not whisper in his ear and inspire him with harshness or avarice, such was his own disposition.

If you care for a more exact likeness of Ludovic Ritti, he was forty, dark complexion, thick beard, broad shoulders, medium height, and strongly built. Picture him moving across the prison yards, limping slightly, smoking a short black pipe, uttering frequent oaths in French, Provençal, Italian, or German, affecting a slight wink when he wants to assume a knowing air, easily pleased by the mention of his son Antonio or the idea of a good deed, and you will know of him all that Charney himself knew, perhaps more than it was needful to know.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days later, at the appointed hour, Charney was at his post beside his plant, when he saw a great black cloud darken the sky and hang poised like a gloomy roof over the tall turrets of the fortress. Some large drops of rain began to fall; retracing his steps, he was about to reënter in search of shelter when hailstones, mingled with the rain, suddenly rattled down on the pavement.

The *povera*,¹ twisted by the storm, its branches blown furiously about, seemed about to be uprooted; its drenched leaves, whirled hither and thither, shuddering in the blast, seemed to utter plaintive groans and shrieks of distress.

Charney paused. He remembered Ludovic's reproaches and glanced eagerly about him in search of something with which to shield his plant; he saw nothing; but the hailstones fell thicker and more heavily than ever and threatened to break it. He trembled for it, for the plant which he had once seen resist with such courage the force of wind and storm; but now he loved his plant too well to let it run the risk of any danger for the sake of winning his point.

Coming to a resolve worthy of a lover, worthy of a father, he drew near it; he placed himself before his ward, like a wall between it and the wind; he stooped over his nursling, acting as a shield against the blows of the hail; and thus, motionless, gasping for breath, beaten by the storm from which he sheltered it, protecting it with his

¹ Poor little thing.

hands, his body, his head, and his affection, he waited for the storm to pass over.

It passed. But might not a similar danger threaten it again, when he, its protector, was under lock and key? Nay, more; Ludovic's wife, escorted by a big watchdog, sometimes visited the yard. Might not this dog in frisking about destroy the philosopher's joy with a snap or a stroke of his paw? Made more prudent by experience, Charney devoted the rest of the day to revolving some plan, and next day he prepared to carry it out.

His scanty portion of firewood was hardly enough in that changeable climate where even in midsummer the nights and mornings are often cold. What matter? What were a few days of privation? Had he not the warmth of his bed? He would lie down earlier, he would get up later. Stingy with his fuel, he hoards it up; and when Ludovic questions him he says:

"It is to build a palace for my lady love."

The gaoler winked, as if he understood; but he had no idea what was meant.

Meantime Charney split, cut, and sharpened his fagots, selecting the most pliant branches, carefully saving the flexible willow withes which serve to bind up his daily stock of fuel. Then in his trunk he discovers a piece of coarse cloth of loose, open texture, with which it is lined; he tears it out, ravel the strongest, coarsest threads. His materials thus prepared, he sets bravely to work, as rapidly as the prison discipline and his gaoler's rigid conscience will permit.

Driving between the paving stones around his plant strong sticks of various sizes, he strengthens them still

more by means of cement, composed of earth laboriously collected here and there between the paving stones, of saltpetre and plaster secretly snatched from the damp walls of the old moats of the fortress. The principal parts of the framework thus arranged, he interlaces them with slender twigs, forming a sort of screen, fit in case of need to protect the *povera* from contact with a foreign body or from the approach of the dog. He was greatly encouraged in his work by the fact that Ludovic, who, when he first began his task, seemed uncertain whether to let him go on, shook his head and uttered a suppressed growl, of evil omen, has now accepted it; and even sometimes, quietly smoking his pipe at the farther end of the yard, leaning against the entrance, one leg crossed over the other, watches the as yet inexperienced workman with a smile; then interrupts the pleasure of his pipe to give a bit of good advice, by which Charney is not always able to profit.

However, the work progresses. Before he finishes it Charney despoils his thin prison pallet in favor of his plant. Another sacrifice which he makes for it. He borrows from his mattress material for some scanty mats and arranges them, as best he may, about his scaffolding, according as stormy winds blow from the Alps, or the sun at high noon may plunge its rays too directly on the delicate growth.

One night the wind blew violently. Charney, who was locked in his cell, saw from his window that the courtyard was strewed with bits of straw and small twigs. His matting and the texture of his screen were not woven with sufficient strength. He promised himself to repair

the damage next day; but next day, when he sallied forth, the work was already done. Some hand more skilful than his own had solidly repaired the interlaced branches and the mats, and he knew in his heart whom he had to thank for it.

Thus, thanks to him, thanks to them, the plant was surrounded by ramparts and shields; and he, Charney himself, growing ever prouder and prouder of it, rapturously watched it as it grew and strengthened and constantly produced fresh marvels for him to admire.

Time seemed to harden it; the tiny blade became a stalk; the woody substance about its stalk, at first so frail, daily gave greater pledges of its endurance, and its happy owner was seized with a curious and impatient desire to see it blossom.

He longed for something at last — the man of worn-out feeling and dispassionate mind; the man so proud of his intellect had stooped from the height of his proud learning to concentrate his vast thoughts upon the contemplation of a blade of grass!

Be not too quick to accuse him of childish weakness and folly. The famous Quaker John Bertram, after spending long hours in examining the structure of a violet, determined to devote his entire mental faculties to the study of the vegetable wonders of nature, and soon assumed a high place among the masters of science. If a philosopher in Malabar went mad in trying to explain the phenomena of the sensitive plant, Count Charney, on the contrary, may find true wisdom in his plant. Has he not already discovered the secret remedy to charm away his cares and to open wide his prison doors?

"Oh! the flower! the flower!" he exclaimed; "that flower, whose beauty shall be for my eye alone, whose perfumes will be mine alone,—what shape will it assume? What will be the color of its petals? No doubt it will afford me new problems to solve, and fling a final challenge to my reason! Well, let it come! let my frail foe appear armed from head to foot; I will not renounce the struggle yet. Perhaps then only shall I be able to grasp the secret of which its incomplete formation has thus far permitted me to catch but a glimpse. But will you bloom? Will you appear before me some day in all the splendor of your beauty and festal array, *Picciola*?"¹

Picciola! that was the name which he gave it when, with a craving to hear the sound of a human voice in his ear amidst his tasks, he conversed aloud with the companion of his captivity as he surrounded it with his cares. "*Povera Picciola!*" Such was Ludovic's exclamation when he sympathized with the "*poor little thing*" who had come near dying of thirst. Charney remembered it.

"*Picciola! Picciola!* will you blossom soon?" he repeated, cautiously parting the leaves at the tips of the branches, to see if there were any signs of a flower; and that name of *Picciola* was sweet to his ear, for it reminded him alike of the two beings who peopled his world—his plant and his gaoler.

One morning, at the hour of his daily walk, as he questioned *Picciola*, leaf by leaf, his eyes suddenly rested on one part of the plant and his heart beat violently. He put his hand to it and the blood rushed to his head. It was long since he had felt so lively an emotion. He saw

¹ Little one.

at the tip of the main stalk an unwonted growth of greenish hue, silky, spherical, covered with tiny scales, one above the other, like the slates on the rounded dome of some elegant kiosk.

There was no room for doubt; that was a bud. The flower was not far off.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "flycatcher" came often to his window and took pleasure in watching the Count, so busily employed about his plant. He saw him mix his mortar, weave his mats, and construct his trellis work, and like him a captive, and a captive for a longer time than he, he readily entered in thought into the philosopher's anxieties.

At that same grated window another face, fresh and smiling, now appeared. It was that of a woman — a young girl whose bearing is at once alert and timid. In the carriage of her head, in the flash of her eyes, modesty alone seems to temper vivacity.

Is she one of those angels of charity who visit prisons? No; filial love alone has thus far filled her heart. The daughter of Girhardi, the Italian, the "flycatcher," she has left Turin, its gaieties, its lovely walks, and the shores of the Doria-Riparia, to take up her abode in the little town of Fenestrella, not at first allowed to see her father, but to breathe the same air with him, to think of him, to be near him. Now, by dint of entreaties and prayers, she has obtained permission to visit him occasionally, and that is why she is so happy, so fresh, and so fair!

Curiosity leads her to the grated window which looks out on the little court; a feeling of interest holds her there in spite of herself, for she fears lest the prisoner should see her. She need not fear; Charney will not see her; just now Picciola and her opening bud wholly engross him.

A week later, when the young girl again visited her father, she turned furtively to the tiny window to glance at the other prisoner ; Girhardi holds her back.

"For three days he has not visited his plant," he says. "The poor man must indeed be ill."

"Ill!" she says with a look of surprise.

"I saw the doctors cross the yard, and according to what Ludovic tells me, they are only agreed on one point ; that is, that he will very likely die."

"Die!" repeated the young girl, and her eyes filled with tears, and her face assumed a look of terror rather than of compassion. "Oh ! how I pity him ! poor fellow !" Then, gazing at her father with agony and alarm : "Do people die here, then ? Or rather, how can they live ? No doubt the confinement in this prison and exhalations from the old moats caused his illness !" she cried, pressing the old man in her arms ; for while she spoke of Charney she thought only of her father.

Girhardi tried to console her and clasped her hand. She covered his own with tears.

At this moment Ludovic came in with a fresh victim which he had just caught for the "flycatcher." It was a fine beetle (*Scarabeus auratus*), which he held out with a look of triumph.

Girhardi smiled, thanked him, and slyly set the insect free, for it was the twentieth of the same species which Ludovic had brought him in a few days.

He then inquired for Charney.

"*Per mio santo padrone !*"¹ said Ludovic, "I don't neglect him any more than I do the rest ; and so long as he is not

¹ By my patron saint.

in God's keeping,¹ he will be in mine, *Signor*. I have just watered his plant."

"But why, if he can never see it bloom?" asked the young girl sadly.

"*Perchè, Damigella?*"² said Ludovic. Then he added, with a knowing air and his usual wink: "The doctors think that the poor fellow is laid on his back forever; but I, the gaoler, *non lo credo!*"³ Odd zounds! I have my secret."

He turned on his heel and left the room with an effort to resume his rough voice and stern look, in order to warn the girl that by his watch she had but twenty-two moments more to spend with her father. At the end of that time he returned and saw that his orders were obeyed.

Charney's illness was but too real. Be the cause what it might, one night, after paying his usual visit and customary attentions to Picciola, a strange feeling of lassitude overcame him. With heavy head and trembling limbs he went to bed, scorning to call for help and trusting that sleep would cure him.

Not sleep but pain visited him; and next day, when he tried to rise, a power stronger than his will held him fast to his couch. He closed his eyes and submitted.

In the hour of danger the philosopher recovered his composure, the conspirator his pride. He would have felt it a disgrace to utter a sigh or a groan, or to implore the help of those who had parted him from the world. He merely gave Ludovic a few directions in regard to his plant, in case he was confined to his bed for any length of time, in that durance vile now added to his other cap-

¹ Dead.

² Why, Miss?

³ I think not.

tivity. The doctors came and he refused to answer their questions. He felt that his life being no longer his own, he was not responsible for its preservation, any more than he was for the management of his confiscated estates, and that those who had taken possession of him and of all his worldly goods must care for him now.

The doctors paid no heed to his obstinate silence at first and insisted. Discouraged at last by his persistency, they resolved to question the disease itself.

Each of them read the symptoms in his own way, for each of them belonged to a different school. One saw sure signs of a putrid fever, another those of inflammation of the bowels; the third opined that it was apoplexy or paralysis, and declared that the patient's silence was due to inflammation of the brain.

The commander of the fortress paid two visits to the sick-room. The first time he came, he asked if the patient had any wish which he could gratify; he even offered to change his quarters, if there were reason to think that the cell was damp or unwholesome. The count merely shook his head.

The second time he came, the commander brought a priest. Charney being given up by the doctors, it was his duty to prepare the prisoner to receive the consolations of religion. The priest, summoned to the sick man's side, understood, not only by the patient's silence and immobility, but better yet by the inscriptions on the wall, how little response he could hope for from that proud spirit.

He was content to pass the night in prayer by the bedside, interrupting his pious office to share with Ludovic the cares which the latter lavished on the patient.

During the night, the turning point of the disease, Charney became delirious, and priest and gaoler were forced to unite their efforts to prevent their patient from springing out of bed. And while he struggled in their arms, amid incoherent words and wild ravings, he ever and anon repeated the words "*Picciola! povera Picciola!*"

"*Andiamo, andiamo!*"¹ The time has come," muttered Ludovic. "Yes, it is high time," . . . he repeated impatiently; "but how can I leave the chaplain here alone to wrestle with this madman? And yet in an hour it may be too late! Ah, holy Virgin! I think he is growing calmer; . . . he shuts his eyes, he stretches his arms as if to sleep! If when I return he is still alive, hurrah! huzza! hurrah!"

In fact, the sick man's delirium had ceased; Ludovic begged the priest to watch him and hurried from the room.

In that room, dimly lit by a flickering lamp, there was no sound save the irregular breathing of the sick man, the monotonous prayer of the priest, and the Alpine wind which muttered between the bars. Twice the sound of a human voice broke in. It was the challenge of the sentinel as Ludovic passed and repassed the sentry on his way to his own house, and again on his return.

Scarce half an hour later he reappeared, bearing a bowl filled with some steaming liquid.

"My Lord! I came near killing my dog," said he. "He began to howl; that's a bad sign."² But how is he? Has he been out of his head again? Anyhow, here's

¹ Come, come.

² It is an old superstition that if a dog howls the sick person will die.

something that will quiet him. I have just tasted it. It's as bitter as five hundred thousand devils! . . . Excuse me, *mio padre*! ¹ just taste it yourself and see."

The priest waved away the bowl.

"Well, you are right, it is not for us; a pint of Muscatel with plenty of slices of lemon would keep us up better this cold night; is n't that so, *Signor Cappellano*? ² But this is for him, only for him. . . . He must drink it; . . . he must drink it all! Those are the orders."

As he spoke he poured part of the liquid into a cup, shook it and blew on it to cool it; and when he thought it just right, he administered it to Charney, almost by force, while the priest held the sick man's head. Then, covering his patient carefully, he said:

"We shall see the effect; it can't be long. I sha'n't budge from here until the thing is settled. All my birds are caged; they will not fly away, and my wife must do without me for once."

Seeing that nothing happened, he repeated his dose, but became somewhat alarmed when he saw no change in the state of the patient. He feared lest his imprudence might have hastened the end. He strode to and fro, stamping his foot, snapping his fingers, and shaking his fist at the bowl containing the rest of the liquid.

Suddenly he halted to gaze at Charney's pale and rigid features.

"I have killed him!" he cried with a dreadful oath made up of French, Italian, and Provençal.

The chaplain looked up quickly; Ludovic paid no heed to him but resumed his march, stamping, swearing, and

¹ Father.

² Chaplain.

snapping his fingers harder than ever ; then at last, worn out with emotion, he knelt by the priest, and, muttering a *mea culpa*,¹ he fell asleep in the midst of a prayer.

When day dawned he still slept ; the priest was still praying. A hot hand was placed on Ludovic's head and he woke with a start.

"A drink !" said the sick man.

At the sound of that voice, which he had never expected to hear again, Ludovic opened his eyes wide and gazed in wonder at Charney, whose face was bathed in perspiration. Whether the disease had taken a turn, whether, nature helping, the prisoner's vigorous temperament had conquered the evil, or whether the double dose administered by Ludovic was possessed of great sudorific power, this violent perspiration seemed to have restored the patient at once to life and reason. He himself directed what should be done for his comfort. Then, turning to the priest : "I am not dead yet, you see. If I get over this, and I hope I shall, I beg you will tell my trio of doctors that it is not to them that I am indebted, and that I want no more of their visits or their science, false and foolish like all the rest. I understood enough of their talk to feel sure that my recovery is due to a lucky chance alone."

"Chance !" murmured the chaplain, his eyes fixed on this sentence on the wall : "*Chance is blind, and it alone is the father of creation.*"

Then, solemnly pronouncing the final word which Charney himself had added : "*Perhaps !*" he left the room.

¹ Act of contrition, literally "my fault."

CHAPTER VIII.

ABSORBED in the pleasure of his success, Ludovic seemed lost in delight on hearing the Count's words; not that he paid any heed to what he said; far from it! But that his dying man should speak, look, live, sweat! It was this that so charmed and enraptured him. After a pause of admiring silence, he cried:

"*Vivat! vivat! che meraviglia!*"¹ He is saved! Thanks to whom?"

And he waved his empty bowl in the air, kissing it and lavishing upon it all the tenderest phrases of his vocabulary.

"Thanks to whom?" repeated the prisoner. "Thanks to your kind care, perhaps, my good Ludovic. But if I really get well, the doctors will credit it to their prescriptions all the same, and the chaplain to his prayers."

"The glory is not due to them nor to me," replied Ludovic, waving more frantically than ever. . . . "As for the *Signor Cappellano*, . . . I don't know; . . . he can't have done anything but good; . . . but it's some one else! It's some one else!"

"Why! who is this savior, this unknown protector? Let us hear who he is," said Charney somewhat indifferently, for he fancied that Ludovic attributed his cure to the intervention of some saint.

"It was no he," said the gaoler, "but a she."

"What! you don't mean to say? The Madonna, was it?"

¹ Hurrah, hurrah! What a miracle!

"No, it was no madonna at all, *Signor Conte*. She who rescued you from death and from the devil's clutches too no doubt, for you were dying without confessing your sins, was first and foremost, above and before all, '*la Signora Picciola, Signorina la Picciolina! Piccioletta!*'¹ . . . my goddaughter. . . . Yes, my goddaughter; for it was I who first gave her that name, . . . the name of *Picciola!* Didn't you say so? So she is my goddaughter. . . . I am her godfather, . . . and I am proud of her, *per Bacco!*"²

"Picciola!" cried the Count, starting up in bed and leaning on his pillow, his face expressing the utmost interest. "Explain, my good Ludovic, explain!"

"Oh, yes, pretend to be astonished, do!" replied the latter with his usual wink. "Is this the first time she has done you the same service? When you have these attacks, is n't it always that herb that cures you? You told me so, at any rate, and I remembered it, thank God; for it seems that Picciola knows more in one of her leaves than all the bigwigs of Montpellier and Paris put together. Yes, my little goddaughter in this case would have put a whole regiment of doctors to rout, even were it a regiment of four battalions, four hundred men to a battalion! Let me tell you, to prove it, that those three donkeys gave up the case and beat a retreat; they pulled the sheet up over your head and said you were a dead man; while Picciola! . . . Oh! the brave little plant! May Heaven preserve her seed! . . . As for me, I sha'n't forget the prescription; and if ever my little Antonio falls ill, I shall make

¹ The lady Picciola, little Miss Picciola, sweet little Picciola.

² By Jove!

him drink it in tea and eat it in salad, though it's as bitter as aloes. She had only to show her face and the victory was complete! For you are cured; yes, really cured; for your eyes are opened wide, you laugh! . . . Ah! hurrah for the *illustrissima Signora Picciola!*"

Charney enjoyed the loud, loquacious delight of his good keeper; his return to life, the idea that he owed it to that same plant which had already charmed away his weary hours of captivity, inspired him with a genuine sense of pleasure, and a smile broke on his fevered lips, when suddenly a painful, cruel thought flashed across his mind.

"But," he asked, "how did this plant cure me? How did you use it?"

And he trembled with dread as he asked the question.

"Nothing could be simpler," calmly replied the gaoler; "a pint of water and a good fire; let it boil up three times; . . . a perfect herb tea; how else could I use it?"

"Merciful heavens!" cried Charney, sinking back on his pillow, "you have killed her! Ah! I cannot blame you, Ludovic; and yet, . . . my poor Picciola! What shall I do? what will become of me without her?"

"Come, come, don't get excited," said Ludovic, approaching him and assuming a most paternal tone to comfort the captive, who had given way to his grief like a child robbed of his favorite toy. "Don't get excited, and don't throw off your blankets. Listen to me," he added, tucking in the blankets and smoothing the bedclothes. "Should I have scrupled to sacrifice an herb to save a man? No, of course not. Well, and yet I could not make up my mind to kill her at once and to thrust her into the boiling water whole. Besides, there was no need of

it. I only took a loan from her. With my wife's scissors I clipped off a lot of leaves which she did not need at all, a few little twigs without any buds, . . . for she has three buds now! What do you say to that, eh? Isn't that nice of her! . . . The operation was quickly done; she did not die of it. On the contrary, *cap de Dious!*¹ She's all the better for it! And so are you too! You see that you must be good; . . . be good, perspire well, make haste and get well, and you shall see her again!"

Charney gave him a grateful look and held out his hand.

This time Ludovic did not refuse to take it; he pressed it affectionately, and his eyes were moist; but suddenly, no doubt blaming himself for varying from the strict lines which he had laid down for his conduct, his face lengthened, his voice grew gruff; still clasping the prisoner's hand, but trying to deceive him as to the cause of his first impulse, he said:

"There, you see you are throwing off your blankets again!" and he gently replaced the sick man's arm under the coverings; then with more warnings to be prudent, uttered in an official tone, he left the room humming gravely:

I am a gaoler,
That's my line:
Better keep the key,
Than a prisoner be.

¹ Provençal oath.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT day and the next, a great weakness, the natural result of the severe crisis through which he had passed, made Charney almost incapable of motion or thought ; but on the third day a perceptible improvement set in, and although still confined to his bed, he hoped soon to be able to resume his usual walks and to see his companion and preserver.

For all his thoughts were of her. He cannot understand how that frail growth, found beneath his feet in his prison yard, should have healed his griefs, which the splendors of wealth and luxury could not divert ; should dispute him with death, to whom human knowledge had yielded him.

He clung to Picciola with a feeling of superstition. His gratitude to that inert, insensible being was founded on nothing rational or premeditated ; but he felt a yearning to give his love in exchange for the benefits which he had received. Where reason ends, fancy begins. His imagination took fire, and his affection for Picciola soon became worship.

He persuaded himself that there was some supernatural link between them ; that there were secret attractions in matter ; inexplicable sympathies which draw men to plants. He who still refused to acknowledge God seemed about to accept the childish beliefs of fetichism¹ and judicial astrology.² Picciola was his star, his Madonna, his talisman !

¹ Idol worship, especially as practised by the natives of Western Africa.

² As opposed to natural astrology or astronomy, a science by which future events were said to be read by the planets and other celestial bodies.

His imagination still excited by fever perhaps, he saw nothing in nature but Picciola. He searches his scientific memory to find similar instances, reviving the story of marvellous plants, from Homer's moly¹ to Latona's² palm and Odin's ash,³ or the thorn which blooms in midwinter.⁴ He recalled the Roman fig tree Rumina,⁵ the Celtic Teutates,⁶ adored under the guise of an oak; the vervain⁷ of the Gauls, the Greek lotus,⁸ the beans of the Pythagoreans,⁹ Bahman, the mallow of the fire worshippers,¹⁰ the mandragora¹¹ of Hebrew priests, the miraculous effects of the Solomon's seal and the

¹ A plant to which Homer ascribes miraculous properties.

² Mother of Apollo.

³ Odin occupies the same place in Norse mythology as Jupiter in the Greek. The ash tree, Yggdrasil, the tree of the universe, has roots which run in three directions — to heaven, to the home of the Norse Giants, and to the under world. Under each root is a fountain of rare virtue. In the tree, which drops honey, sit an eagle, a squirrel, and four stags. At the root lies the serpent Withüggo, gnawing it. The squirrel, Katalöshe, runs up the tree to sow strife between the eagle at the top and the serpent at the root.

⁴ Glastonbury thorn. When Joseph of Arimathea reached the end of his travels, where Glastonbury Abbey now stands, near Wells, England, he planted his staff in the earth, and it still blossoms in midwinter.

⁵ Tree under which Romulus and Remus were reared. Rumina is also the name of the Roman goddess who protected infants.

⁶ God to whom the Celts offered human sacrifices.

⁷ The holy herb, so known for its use in ancient rites and ceremonies, bound by the heralds around their heads when they declared war.

⁸ Whose fruit was so sweet that those who ate it forgot all else.

⁹ Followers of Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher, born about 608 B.C., who taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls through various orders of animal existence. Beans being used in the ballot box, his followers were forbidden to eat beans, *i.e.*, to meddle with politics.

¹⁰ Followers of Zoroaster, a Persian philosopher, date of birth uncertain.

¹¹ Mandrake, whose root is forked like a human being. Supposed to shriek when uprooted. Used in spells and incantations.

hazel rod.¹ He remembered the blue champak² of the Persians, which grows only in Paradise ; the Sipakhora, whose fruit, Ctesias³ says, gives two hundred years of life ; the Torba⁴ tree, which shades the celestial abode of Mahomet with its branches ; the Katso tree, yet more divine, which overhangs the head of God himself, and whose every flower is endowed with a soul. He thought of the Buddha tree, every leaf of which is inscribed with one of the many letters of the Thibetan alphabet, a vegetable poem varied and extended from season to season, an unending song in praise of the Hindu Christ. He attached symbolic meaning to the Japanese custom of rearing statues of the gods upon pedestals of heliotrope and water-lilies. He admired the religious scruples of the Siamese, which forbid them to destroy certain plants or even to break a single leaf. He heard Charlemagne,⁵ the law-giver and philosopher, from his western throne recommend to his people the wise culture of plants ; nay, he understands the love which Xerxes,⁶ according to Claudius Aelianus⁷ and Herodotus,⁸ bore for a plane tree, caressing it, sleeping in its shade, adorning it with ornaments of pure gold, and weeping when compelled to leave it.

That which once excited his mockery and scorn and

¹ Supposed to bend when held over a spot where water or treasure may be found.

² A flower odious to bees, worn by Hindu women in their hair, sacred to the Hindu god of love.

³ A Greek doctor of medicine, about 416 B.C.

⁴ Stands in Paradise, in the palace of Mahomet.

⁵ Proclaimed Emperor of the West, A.D. 800.

⁶ King of Persia, 485-472 B.C.

⁷ Roman writer of third century.

⁸ Greek historian, called the "Father of History," born 484 B.C.

lowered weak humanity now raises it in his eyes; for he knows what valuable lessons may be learned from a leaf or a stalk; and in the customs of idolatry he now sees but the sense of gratitude which called them forth. Did not a slender reed suffice to procure man his first arrow, his first pen, his first instrument of music—the three great means of conquest?

In this frame of mind, well on the road to health, absorbed in thought, Charney was one morning in his room, which he had not left since his illness, when the door was thrown open and Ludovic entered with beaming face.

"She is in bloom!" he cried.

"What! . . . Picciola?"

"Yes, '*Picciola, Piccioletta, figliaccia mia!*'"¹

"In bloom!" repeated Charney, his eye kindling, his cheek reddening; "in bloom!" and rushing to the stairs: "Oh! I must see her!"

In vain the good gaoler remonstrated, urging that it would be imprudent to go out so soon, that he must wait a day or two longer, that it was too early in the morning, the air was chill, that a relapse rarely forgives; all was in vain. All he could do was to persuade the prisoner to wait an hour longer, until the sun could join the party.

How slowly that hour passed! And yet he did his best to fill it up. In the first place, for the first time since he was made a prisoner, he thought of his appearance; yes, of his appearance, his dress, in honor of Picciola, of Picciola in bloom! His clothes were wrinkled, his hair uncombed, his beard long; he made himself tidy. A mirror hitherto neglected and forgotten in his precious dressing

¹ My little goddaughter.

case, was brought out ; he shaved himself carefully, he shaved himself to visit his flower !

This is the invalid's first outing, the visit of the sick man to his doctor, the grateful man to his benefactress, the lover to his lady !

And when he is ready, his eyes on the glass, he is amazed to find, in spite of his recent illness, that his eyes are less dull, his features less heavy, his forehead less wrinkled than of old. He remembers that he is still young, and understands that though there be bitter and poisonous thoughts which blight even the outer man, there are also others gifted with the power to rejuvenate.

At the exact moment Ludovic appears. He helps the Count down the long, winding stairs ; and when the latter reaches the little courtyard, whether it be the pure air or the open sky, or the privilege of the sharpened faculties of one recovering from illness, it seemed to him that the perfume of his flower embalmed everything about him ; and to the flower he attributes the sweet sensations of well-being which he experiences.

Of what use to the flowers are their sweet odors ? Do they themselves enjoy them ?

No.

Are they meant for the pleasure of animals ?

Did you ever see a sheep or a dog pause before a rose to inhale its perfume ?

Then it is for man alone that the rich treasures are meant. Wherefore ?

That they may be loved, perhaps.

Charney was not so far wrong, after all, when he believed in the mysterious force attracting man to plants.

Picciola stood before him in all the splendor of her beauty ; she displayed to his eyes her many-hued and brilliant corolla ; white, purple, and pink were mingled in the broad petals fringed with tiny, silvery rays, upon which the sun shone until they twinkled like a luminous halo. Charney gazed at it rapturously ; he feared lest he should dim its lustre by a breath or wither it by a touch. He no longer dreamed of analysis and study ; he admired it, he enjoyed it with sight and smell. But soon another thought diverted him and his eyes strayed from the flower. He sees the marks of mutilation all along the stem, drooping branches, leaves torn by the scissors. The scars are not yet healed. He feels that he owes his life to the plant ; his heart swells with a feeling stronger and sweeter than mere admiration, and Picciola's good deeds lead him to forget her beauty and her perfume.

CHAPTER X.

By order of the doctors the invalid was allowed for some days to walk in his courtyard whenever and as long as he chose. He was thus enabled to resume his studies with fresh ardor.

Desiring to note down the observations made in regard to his plant from its first day until the present time, he tried to bribe Ludovic to procure ink, pens, and paper for him. He expected to see him frown, look important, require much urging, and yield at last, either from the interest he felt in his patient and his goddaughter, or from a spirit of gain; for here was an opportunity to drive a trade.

Not so. Ludovic at first took the suggestion cheerfully.

"To be sure, *Signor Conte*, nothing could be easier!" said he, filling his pipe and turning aside to take a few whiffs to keep it alight; for he never smoked before Charney, who objected to the smell of tobacco. "I've no objection. But all those little articles are kept under lock and key by the governor, not by me. If you want writing materials, send in a petition *piu presto*,¹ and perhaps you may get them."

Charney smiled but was not discouraged.

"But to write that petition, my dear Ludovic, I should first require just what I ask for — ink, pens, and paper."

"To be sure, *Signor Conte*, to be sure. I put the cart before the horse, you see," replied the gaoler. "This is

¹ At once.

the way the petition dodge is generally worked," he added with a knowing air, his head thrown back and his arms crossed behind him. "I go to the governor and I tell him that you have a favor to ask, without saying what it may be. . . . That's not my affair; it's his affair and your affair. If he can't come to see you himself, he sends you one of his men. This man hands you a pen, a sheet of official paper, just one sheet; he holds the inkstand; you write on it in his presence; he seals the paper before you; you return him the pen, he carries off the letter, and that's the end of it."

"But, Ludovic, I prefer to owe this favor to you and not to the governor."

"To me, *mordious*!¹ Then you don't know my orders?" said the gaoler, instantly assuming his gruff, stern expression.

He took a long pull at his pipe, blew out the smoke slowly, as if to hold the Count at a distance, turned on his heel and left. And next day when Charney returned to the charge, he merely winked and shook his head.

Too proud to humble himself before the governor, but too eager to carry out his plans to give them up so easily, the prisoner made a pen of a quill toothpick; he made shift to use his razor as a knife; soot steeped in water and a gilt bottle in his dressing case did for inkstand and ink; and fine white cambric handkerchiefs, a relic of his former splendor, served in the place of paper.

In this way Charney, even when parted from Picciola, could still devote himself to her and write out the result of his observations.

¹ Provençal oath.

How surprising, how delightful they were ! How happy he would have been could he have imparted them to an attentive ear !

His neighbor, the "flycatcher," seemed to him worthy of his confidences ; the face, which once struck him as so sullen, so severe, now seemed to beam with good-nature and to shine with intelligence. When from his little window the old man cast his half-dreamy, half-curious glance upon him and upon Picciola, Charney felt attracted by the glance. A gesture, a smile had indeed passed between them, but the rules of the prison forbade them to speak, even to ask for each other's health ; and the great student of the marvels of nature was forced to keep his precious discoveries to himself.

Among these may be mentioned the strange power which he found his flower possessed of turning towards the sun and facing it throughout its course, the better to absorb its rays ; when they hid behind the clouds and rain threatened, the flower at once sought shelter beneath her folded petals, as a ship takes in sail before a storm.

"Is heat so needful to it?" thought Charney ; "and why? . . . Why should it fear a slight shower which would refresh it? Oh! I trust her now ; she will explain."

Picciola had already served him as a friendly physician ; she might at a pinch act as compass and barometer ; she was also to take the place of a clock to him.

By dint of inhaling her perfume he fancied he noticed that it varied at different periods of the day. This phenomenon at first seemed to him an illusion of his senses ; but repeated experiments proved it a reality, and he found

that he could tell with perfect precision the hour of the day by the scent of his plant.¹

The flowers had multiplied, and, especially towards evening, Picciola's fragrance was at its height. Then how the happy captive loved to approach her! With a few boards, due to Ludovic's generosity, he had built a little bench resting on four strong sticks sharpened at the end and driven in between the stones. A rough back board afforded him support when he chose to meditate and forget himself, living in the atmosphere of his plant. There he felt more at his ease than he had ever been on his rich, silken couches; he sometimes spent hours there, recalling the days of his youth, which had passed without pleasure and without affection, wasted in the pursuit of empty dreams.

Amid these retrospects he often fell into deep reveries, half waking, half sleeping, when his over-excited fancy filled the courtyard with delicious dreams.

Once more he took part in those feasts where care had ever pursued him. He saw his old home in the Rue de Verneuil brilliantly lighted. The noise of carriage wheels rang in his ear; by the light of torches they entered the wide court, and from the carriages stepped forth in turn fashionable beauties wrapped in fur; dandies with narrow-crowned felt hats, big cravats, and ribbon garters; famous artists, with short hair and bare neck, in half Greek, half French costume; generals with tri-colored sash;² scientists and men of letters, with or without green

¹ The English botanist Smith found the same properties in the *Antirrhinum ripens* (*British Flora*, vol. iv, p. 658).

² The French colors, red, white, and blue.

collars.¹ A throng of lackeys showed them the way, their fresh liveries mocking at the old ones of the Conventional Assembly,² now gone out of fashion.

In his drawing-rooms he again encountered all the freaks of the period. Toga and chlamys³ rubbed against frock coat and cloak; sandals with rosettes, laced and spurred boots trod the inlaid floor side by side with caliga and cothurnus.⁴ Lawyers, writers, soldiers, bankers, ministers, contractors, artists, and politicians mingled in this hubbub of the Directory. An actor talked with a member of the clergy; a former nobleman with one who had been poor; Aristocracy and Democracy clasped hands; Learning and Wealth went arm in arm.

Charney gazed with a smile at this medley of morals, conditions, and costumes. What was once a bitter and prolific source of contemptuous thoughts concerning all mankind now roused in him only a slight amusement at his own folly and futile efforts.

Elegant women passed before him and greeted him with a smile. He recognized them. They were the wonted guests and the ornament of his brilliant parties when, rich and free, he was greeted as one of the fortunate of the earth.

¹ The badge of the Institute of France.

² Period previous to the Directory, when France was governed by the stern will of the National Convention (1792-1795).

³ Toga, robe of Roman patrician. Chlamys, mantle fastened on the right shoulder by a clasp, worn by Greeks and Romans. Under the First Republic the French affected the dress and manners of the ancient Greek and Roman Republics.

⁴ Caliga, a buskin studded with nails, worn by old Roman soldiers. Cothurnus, boot with high heels and thick sole, worn by ancient actors to make them appear taller on the stage.

There shone unrivalled the haughty Tallien,¹ in Greek dress, costly jewels and rings even on her bare feet, scarce covered by light gilded sandals; the charming Récamier,² who in Athens would have been made a divinity; and the sweet, plaintive Josephine,³ ex-Countess de Beauharnais, who by dint of grace often passed for the most beautiful of the three.

There were others still who were noticeable even beside these, dazzling in their beauty, their coquetry, and their dress.

How young and fair they seem to Charney now! How far more sweet and potent than of old! How happy he would be, might he choose among so many charmers!

He tries to do so; and after turning from one to another, suddenly in the midst he sees one, not with bare shoulders or decked in diamonds. . . .

Simple in her dress and bearing, she timidly hangs her head and dreads to be seen. Yet she too is beautiful! She is young and dressed in white, with only her simple grace and the blush that colors her cheek to set off her charms. Charney never saw her before, and yet as he gazes at her, the others seem to fade and disappear; a sweet emotion fills his soul, he scarce knows why.

But how his emotion grows when he sees in her dark hair a flower, its only ornament! That flower . . . is from his plant! It is the flower of his prison!

He stretches his arms towards the young girl; . . . suddenly his eyes grow dim, everything swims before him;

¹ Wife of pro-Consul Tallien.

² Wife of a rich Parisian banker, famed for her wit and beauty.

³ Wife of Napoleon I and later divorced by him.

the music dies away ; the maiden and the flower seem to melt into one another ; clumsy paving stones replace the shining inlaid floor. Calm reason has returned ; memory destroys the illusion, reality the dream.

The prisoner opens his eyes. He is on his bench ; his flower is before him and the sun is setting.

The first few times that he became a prey to this hallucination Charney marvelled at it. These sweet dreams invariably came to him when he was seated on his bench beside his plant. After some consideration he thought he understood the phenomenon. Does not science teach that the gaseous emanations exhaled by plants sometimes produce slight and agreeable unconsciousness ? He now sees how far the relations between himself and his plant may reach, and the almost magic influence which it exerts over him.

It is Picciola who gives him the brilliant balls at which he assists.

But who is that modest, candid young girl, whose unlooked-for presence so moves and delights him ? Did he ever see her ? Like those other women, is she but a memory of his past life ? He cannot recall her. How if she be a revelation of the future ? But has he a future, and dare he believe in revelations ? No ! the white-robed maiden with the modest blush, who eclipses and pales her brilliant rivals, is Picciola herself — Picciola personified and poetized in a dream !

Nay then ; it is she whom he shall love ! He will not forget her graceful form and the ingenuous look which she wore. Her sweet image shall henceforth beguile his weary hours ; for that fair girl, a smiling phantom sum-

moned to interrupt his solitude, his prison doors must needs fly open ; she will visit him, walk with him, talk with him, sit beside him, smile on him, love him ! She shall live by his life, his breath, his love ; and he will talk to her in fancy and see her with closed eyes !

Thus the prisoner of Fenestrella followed up his beloved studies with the no less bewildering charm of illusions, and advanced farther and farther into that sphere of poetry which one leaves, as the bee does the heart of the flowers, perfumed and laden with honey. Side by side with his positive life he had his life of imagination, the complement of the other, without which man but half enjoys the benefits of the Creator.

His time was now divided between Picciola the plant and Picciola the young girl. When weary of reasoning and study he had pleasure and love.

CHAPTER XI.

CONTINUING his study of the flower, Charney was daily lost in greater wonder at the ordinary marvels of nature. But his eyes were not able to pierce the delicate mysteries beyond the power of ordinary vision. He became impatient at his lack of power, when Ludovic gave him, in the name of his neighbor, the Italian conspirator, a powerful microscope, with which he himself had numbered eight thousand ocular facies on the cornea¹ of a fly. Charney trembled with joy.

Thanks to this instrument the least perceptible parts of the plant were suddenly brought into bold relief, increased a hundred-fold. He now advanced, or thought he advanced, rapidly on the road to discoveries.

Unknown to him, during these hours of rapturous study, Charney had often two attentive spectators who followed his every movement and sympathetically shared his every emotion — Girhardi and his daughter.

The latter, trained by a deeply religious father, living a solitary and contemplative life, had one of those natures made up of all holy enthusiasms. With her beauty, her virtues, the graces of her mind and person, she had not lacked admirers ; gifted with deep and broad sensibilities, she seemed made for tender affections ; but if she had felt any slight preferences amidst the gaieties of Turin, her father's imprisonment had swallowed them all in one great sorrow.

¹ Outer transparent part of the eyeball.

But since she has seen Charney she feels interest and compassion for him. He is a captive like her father, and with her father! He has nothing to love but a plant, and how dearly he loves it!

No doubt the prisoner's face, his noble brow, his graceful figure had their share in arousing the young girl's pity; but if she had known him in the days of his wealth, when a false show of happiness surrounded him, she would not have distinguished him from others. What charmed her in him was his loneliness, his misfortune, his submission. She instinctively bestowed on him her friendship, her esteem; for, in her ignorance, she ranks misfortune among the virtues.

As ready to do a good deed as she was slow to meet the gaze of a stranger, perhaps too unconscious of danger, she encourages her father in his kindly feeling for Charney.

At last Girhardi, standing at his window, not content to greet the Count with a gesture as usual, beckoned him to come as close as possible, and lowering his voice, as if afraid of being overheard, he enters upon the following conversation:

"Perhaps I have some good news for you, sir."

"And I, sir, have to thank you for the microscope you were kind enough to lend me."

"It was not my idea; it was my daughter who suggested it to me."

"You have a daughter, sir, and you are allowed to see her?"

"Yes, I am a father, and I thank Heaven for it daily. My poor child took a great interest in you, my dear sir,

when you were ill, and since then too, seeing you lavish such care on your flower. Have you never seen her through these bars?"

"Why, yes; . . . I think I have."

"But in talking of my daughter I forgot to give you the piece of news. The Emperor is going to Milan, where he is to be consecrated as King of Italy."

"King of Italy! Then, sir, he will be more than ever your master and mine. As for the microscope," added Charney, who paid but little heed to the great piece of news, and did not dream that there was more to it, "I have robbed you of it for a very long time. . . . Forgive me, I may need it for my next experiments; but I will return it to you . . . soon."

"I can do without it, I have others," kindly replied the "flycatcher," guessing from the tone of his voice how much it cost his neighbor to part with the microscope; "keep it, sir, keep it in memory of a fellow-prisoner who feels, believe me, the utmost interest in your welfare."

Charney strove to express his gratitude to the generous man; the latter cut him short:

"But let me finish what I have to tell you."

And, speaking still lower:

"I hear that a number of pardons will be granted on the occasion of the new Emperor's second coronation. Have you friends in Turin or Milan? Can you get them to move in the matter?"

Charney sadly shook his head.

"I have no friends," he said.

"No friends!" repeated the old man with a look of compassion; "have you lost faith in men? Friendship

never fails those who believe in her. Well! I have friends, friends whom even adversity has not shaken; perhaps they can do for you what they have not yet been able to do for me."

"I will ask no favors of General Bonaparte," replied the Count in a proud, curt tone which plainly revealed his ancient hostilities.

"Hush! Speak lower. . . . I thought I heard some one. . . . No, I was mistaken —"

There was a slight pause; then the Italian went on in a tone of paternal reproach:

"Dear friend, you are still bitter; I thought your studies of the past few months had killed those hatreds which are odious to God and which warp a man's life. So the kindly virtues of your flower have not wholly healed the wounds inflicted by society? I have possibly more reason than you to complain of this Bonaparte whom you hate, for my son died in his service."

"So you strove to avenge your son!" Charney hastily broke in.

"I see that those false reports have reached your ears," said the old man, raising his eyes to heaven, as if to appeal to the witness of God. "I, revenge myself by a crime! no; but in my first grief I could not control my feelings, it is true; and while the people of Turin hailed the victor with shouts of joy, my cries of despair mingled with the cheers of the mob. I was arrested; I had a knife about me. Wretches, to curry favor with the master,¹ readily persuaded him that I had attempted his life. I was treated as an assassin, and I was only an unhappy father who had

¹ Napoleon.

just heard of his son's death. Well! I can understand that he was deceived; I even understand that Bonaparte is not a cruel man; for he did not put either you or me to death. If he sets me free, it will merely be in reparation of a mistake; but I shall bless him all the same; not that I cannot endure my captivity! Full of faith in Providence, I submit to anything and everything. But my imprisonment distresses my daughter; it is for my daughter's sake that I would be free, to put an end to her exile from society, that she may again enjoy the pleasures suited to her age. Have you no one, too, in whom you feel an interest, no woman who weeps for you, for whom you would rejoice to sacrifice the pride which your sense of oppression inspires? Come, permit my friends to speak for you!"

Charney smiled. "No woman weeps for me," he said; "no one sighs for my return. What should I do in the world, where I was not so happy as I am here? But were I to find friends, fortune, and happiness there, I should still say no! a thousand times no! if to regain them I must bow before the power which I strove to destroy."

"What! you forbid yourself to hope?"

"I will never salute as Emperor a man who was my equal."

"Beware lest you sacrifice your future to a feeling of vanity rather than patriotism; . . . but . . . hush!" again said old Girhardi. "I am not mistaken now; some one is coming! Good-bye!"

And he left the grated window.

"Thank you, thank you for the microscope!" cried Charney before he had quite disappeared.

At this moment Ludovic opened the door of the yard.

He brought the prisoner's daily supply of provisions. He saw that Charney was moody and thoughtful, and, unwilling to disturb him, he merely rattled the plates in his hand, as he passed, in token that dinner was ready. Putting the dishes in the prisoner's cell, he withdrew with a silent bow to the "gentleman and his lady," as he sometimes said; that is, to the man and his plant.

"The microscope is mine!" thought Charney. "What have I done to deserve such kindness from a stranger?" And as he saw Ludovic cross the yard: "He too has won my esteem; under his tough skin beats a noble heart, I am sure. Then there are good and feeling souls; but where have they sought refuge?"

An inward voice seemed to answer: "It is because misfortune has taught you to understand a benefit, that men appear less worthy of your scorn. What have those two men actually done? One watered your plant without your knowledge, the other gave you the means to analyze it, to become better acquainted with it."

"Oh!" thought Charney, "the heart does not err; theirs was true generosity."

"Yes!" resumed the voice; "but it was because that generosity was shown to you that you do them justice. Had Picciola never been born, of these two men one might still be in your eyes an imbecile old man given over to degrading tasks; the other a coarse fellow, of mean and sordid avarice! In your former world, Sir Count, did you ever love any one or anything? No, your heart, like your mind, was given to solitude. Here it is because you love Picciola that these two men love you; it is through her that they were drawn to you."

Charney gazed alternately at his plant and his precious microscope. Napoleon, Emperor of the French, King of Italy ! Those terrible words, one-half of which had once sufficed to make him a furious conspirator, made scarcely an impression on him now.

What does he care for the triumphs of the newly elect of the nation, and the liberties of Europe ? An insect which buzzes threateningly about his flower causes him more agony and anxiety than all the encroachments of the new Empire !

CHAPTER XII.

HE has resumed his labors ; armed with his microscope, now his very own, he has repeated his observations, he has extended the field of his discoveries, and his enthusiasm grows ever greater. He invents countless theories concerning the circulation of the sap, the way in which it rises, spreads, and becomes a part of the living plant, without suspecting its double current ; concerning the various hues of his plant and the source of the different savors of the stalk, the leaves, and the flowers ; regarding the gum and resins distilled by herbs ; regarding the wax and honey made from them by bees. He found an answer for everything ; but each day new systems destroyed those of the day before, and he himself rejoiced in his weakness, since it obliged him to exert all the powers of his mind and his imagination, and prevented him from seeing any limit to his enchanting occupations.

Aided by his microscope he devoted himself wholly to his studies ; he watched, he waited, until at last his eyes grew dim ; the microscope dropped from his hand ; the vanquished philosopher sank upon his rustic seat, crossed his arms, and after long meditation thus addressed his plant :

"Picciola, I was once free to roam the earth ; I had many friends, I was surrounded by scientific men ; well ! none of those learned men ever taught me so much as you have ; not one of my friends, or, rather, of those who usurped that title, ever rendered me the good offices that

you have done ; and in this narrow space of ground where you lead a wretched existence between two paving stones, pacing hither and yon, never taking my eye from you, I have thought more, felt more, observed more than in all my travels throughout Europe ! How blind I was ! When I first saw you so feeble, wan, and drooping, I expected nothing of you, and it was a companion that you offered me, a book that you opened for me, a world that you revealed to me !

“That companion soothed my sorrows and drove them away ; she attached me to the existence which she preserved for me ; she taught me to know men and reconciled me to them ! That book made me despise all other books ; it convinced me of my ignorance and humbled my pride ; it compelled me to admit that knowledge, like virtue, can only be won through humility. It is the book of light ! Written in living characters, in a tongue as yet mysterious to me, it offers me sublime enigmas to read, every word of which is a consolation ! That world is the world of one and absolute truth ; it is the intelligent creation ; it is the sum total, the criterion of the eternal and celestial world, the revelation of that immense law of harmony and love which rules the universe, which gravitates atoms and suns, which unites in a single link both the plant and the planets, the insect grovelling on the earth, and the man looking up to heaven to find . . . its author, no doubt !”

Charney, deeply moved, strode up and down ; thought succeeded thought ; a struggle raged in his conscience ; then he turned to Picciola, gazed at her with emotion, glanced hastily towards heaven and murmured :

"All powerful God! invisible source whence proceed all harmony, all fertility, so much false learning has obscured my reason, so many sophistries have hardened my heart that Thou canst not enter it so soon. I cannot hear Thee yet, but I call Thee; I cannot see Thee, but I seek Thee!"

Returning to his room, he read upon the wall:

"God is but a word."

He added:

"May not that word be the answer to the great riddle of the universe?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THUS his days passed away. After devoting hours to study and analysis, weary of his labors and seeking to divert his mind, he left Picciola the flower for Picciola the young girl.

When his head grew heavy and waves of perfume from the blossom filled his senses, when his eyes shunned the light of day, he would say :

“To-night Picciola will entertain.”

And he would yield to that semi-slumber peopled by dreams but still somewhat subject to the light of reason.

Oh ! is it not one of the most bewildering joys permitted to man to guide his dreams whither he will, and enjoy as he pleases that other life where events crowd upon events, where centuries cost us but a single hour's existence, where magic hues seem to cover all the actors in the drama, where emotions alone are real?

Charney yielded to his illusions. True to Picciola's sweet image, it was she whom he summoned ; she was ever first to appear to him, always with the same features, the same graces, young, modest, charming, now appearing among his former companions of study or of pleasure, now with the only beings he had truly loved, and who were no more — his mother, his sister. Having revived his dead family, the joys of his past, did she point the way to another family, destined to exist for Charney some day ; did she foretell for him future joys ? He could not

say; but when he awoke he felt confidence in his fate and regularly noted down in his journal, on fine cambric, the incidents of his dreams; they were the only happy events of his life, to say nothing of his captivity.

And yet once during one of those feasts when he usually found peace and happiness with her, Picciola filled him with sudden alarm. Later on he recalled it only to believe in revelations and the foreknowledge of the mind.

The perfumes of the plant showed that it was six o'clock in the evening. Never before had they been so rich, so powerful, for thirty full-blown flowers combined to produce that magnetic atmosphere which lulled Charney's senses.

Withdrawing from the crowd, he breathed the air upon a green slope, where his beloved phantom had alone accompanied him. Picciola advanced towards him smiling, and he gazed admiringly at her slender figure, the flowing folds of her white dress, and her black curls, in which was the accustomed flower. Suddenly he sees her hesitate; she totters, she stretches out her arms to him; the seal of death is on her brow. He strives to rush towards her; an obstacle which he cannot overcome holds him fast; he utters a shriek and wakes. As he wakes he hears another cry in answer to his; yes, a cry — a woman's voice.

And yet he was in his courtyard, on his bench, beside his plant! And now before his wide-open, bodily eyes another apparition of a maiden appears at the little grated window. At first the graceful, melancholy form seen in the dim light seems vague and uncertain; but it gradually becomes more distinct; he springs up, hastens towards it, and all at once the sweet vision fades, or, rather, the young girl disappears.

Rapid as was her flight, he still plainly saw her features, her figure, her white dress ; he stands motionless ; he thinks he is still dreaming, and that the insuperable obstacle which parted him from Picciola was the prison bars !

Ludovic came hurrying up in great amazement, and finding Charney still profoundly agitated, he says :

"Is your illness coming back, *Signor Conte* ? Good gracious ! We'll call in the doctors, for that is the rule ; but never fear, mistress Picciola and I will answer for your cure in spite of them."

"I am not ill," replied Charney, scarcely recovered from his emotion. "What made you think so ?"

"The 'flycatcher's' daughter, to be sure ! She saw you, she heard you shriek, and she made haste to call me ; was that not what she should have done, poor thing ?"

Charney then remembered that a young girl sometimes visited that part of the fortress.

"The resemblance which I fancied between the stranger and Picciola was only an error of my senses, a very common optical illusion," thought he. "The eye often retains the image of the object upon which it has been resting. How strange to see that sweet image pass from the life of dreams to the life of reality ! And yet Picciola's image did not wholly live in the young girl, nor did she wear a flower in her hair."

As he compared them he recalled the interest which the young Piedmontese had already shown in him, as her father had told him.

She pitied him when he was ill ; it was to her he owed his precious microscope ; she was interested in his dear

studies; even now, by summoning Ludovic, she had given him fresh proof of her kindness!

His heart swelling with gratitude, he felt an overwhelming desire to express it. But how?

Not without some hesitation, not without secret self-reproach, as if he were guilty of profanation, he breaks off, he silently plucks with a trembling hand, a small flowery spray from his plant.

"Once," thought he, "I lavished diamonds and pearls upon false friends, who heeded not the heart which I laid at their feet! Ah! if the offering is only to be estimated by the value attached to it, I swear no gift more precious was ever offered by me than this which I now borrow from you, Picciola!" And putting the little branch in the gaoler's hand he said: "My good Ludovic, give this from me to my old comrade's daughter. Tell her that I thank her for the interest so kindly shown to me, and that Count Charney, poor and a prisoner, has nothing worthier of her acceptance."

Ludovic took the flower in amazement.

He so fully appreciated the prisoner's love for his plant that he could scarcely understand why so slight a service should procure for the "flycatcher's" daughter a mark of such lavish generosity.

"Never mind!" said he, "*per il capo di San Pasquale!*¹ They have only seen my goddaughter from a distance; now they can judge from this specimen how lovely she is, and how sweet she smells!"

¹ By the head of my patron saint.

CHAPTER XIV.

As for Charney, he will soon have to make many similar sacrifices, for the time has come for Picciola to go to seed. Some of her flowers have already lost their brilliant petals; the stamens, now useless, have dropped; the seed vessels begin to swell.

Charney prepares for fresh experiments; he must wound Picciola once more; but she will readily repair her losses. At every joint, at the union of the leaves with the stem, new sprouts are shooting forth in token of future bloom; and, besides, Charney will handle her tenderly.

To-morrow he will set to work.

Next day he takes his seat on the bench with the serious look of a man who is about to try a difficult experiment, and one which may not succeed. At the first glance he is surprised at the languid state of the plant. The flowers, drooping on their stems, seem too feeble to face the sun; the leaves hang their heads and have lost their glossy greenness.

At first Charney thinks that a violent storm is at hand, and his first impulse is to spread his mats to protect Picciola from the rude assaults of wind or hail.

But the sky is cloudless, the air is calm, and an invisible lark sings, lost in space.

His face darkens. Then after a brief pause he says: "She wants water"; and he hastens to his room for it, kneels beside the plant and parts the branches that the

water may reach the roots, but is suddenly struck motionless. His gaze is fixed upon the ground ; the arm which holds the waterpot remains suspended, and every sign of surprise overshadows his brow. He has discovered the trouble.

Picciola is dying.

While she redoubled her blossoms and her sweet scents for his study and his delight, her stem was also increasing rapidly. Confined at its root between two paving stones, choked by the double pressure, she at first threw out a large protruding ring, but the sharp edges of the stone soon wore it away, and the poor plant bled at several wounds.

Picciola needs more space ; her strength and her life-blood exhausted, she will die if no help is at hand ! She will die ! Charney sees it plainly. There is but one way to save her ; that is, to take up the stones which grind her down ; but can he do it ? Without tools all his efforts would be in vain.

He rushes to the gate ; he beats upon it frantically, shouting to Ludovic, who comes at last.

The story, the sight of the disaster overwhelm him ; but, in spite of his affection for his goddaughter, he only answers Charney's prayers and entreaties that he will take up the stones with a sigh and a shrug and these words :

"And how about my orders, *Signor Conte* ?"

The prisoner offers him not one article only from his precious dressing case, but the entire case with all it contains. Ludovic stands erect, folds his arms tight across his breast, and resuming his official manner, his half Provençal, half Piedmontese accent, says :

"*Per Bacco! Mondious!* Not if you offered me all the treasures of the earth. . . . I am an old soldier and I have my orders. Apply to the commanding officer."

"No!" cries Charney; "rather break those stones myself, uproot them from the earth, were I to lose my nails in the task!"

"We shall see about that! But, as you like!"

And Ludovic, who took care to hold his thumb over his pipe when he came in, and to keep it at a distance from the prisoner, now abruptly replacing it between his teeth, and taking a long whiff at it, prepares to go. Charney holds him back.

"Dear Ludovic, you have always been so good to me, can you do nothing for me now, . . . nothing for her?"

"*Nomdédious!*" he replied, struggling to disguise his emotion by oaths; "let me alone, you and your confounded gillyflower! Begging the '*povera's*'¹ pardon; she is not to blame for your devilish obstinacy. What! would you really have the heart to let her die for want of help?"

"But what can I do?"

"Apply to the commander, I tell you."

"Never!"

"Come," said Ludovic, "if it's too much for you, would you like to have me speak to him?"

"I forbid you!" cried Charney.

"What! You forbid me!" exclaimed the gaoler. "*Damnazione!* Am I to take orders from you? How if I choose to apply to him! Very well, so be it! I will not speak to him. After all, you are right, it is none of my business. Let her die, or let her live! It is

¹ Poor thing.

nothing to me! *Che m' importa?*¹ You refuse? Good evening!"

"But would your commander ever understand me?" said the Count, suddenly weakening.

"Why not? Do you take him for a kinzerlick?² Explain the matter to him nicely, with pretty phrases, . . . not too long; you are a scholar; now's the time to prove it. Why should n't he understand the feeling that leads you to love your weed? I understood it well enough. Besides, I shall be there, never fear! I'll tell him how good it is, made into tea, for all sorts of trouble; . . . he's not very robust, . . . he has the rheumatism just now; . . . it's very lucky; . . . he'll understand all the better."

Charney still hesitated; Ludovic winked and pointed to Picciola with her drooping head. The Count nodded and Ludovic went off.

A few minutes later a man in half-military, half-civic dress brought the prisoner all the materials for writing, including a sheet of paper with official heading. As Ludovic had stated, this man remained while Charney wrote his petition; he sealed it, bowed, and carried off the writing materials.

Perhaps you smile with scorn to see the noble Count's pride so soon subdued and his firm will yield at the sight of a faded flower. You forget what Picciola is to the prisoner. You do not know the influence which solitude and imprisonment exert on the proudest, most stubborn

¹ What is it to me?

² Corruption of the German word *Kaiserlich*. At the time of the wars of the First Republic and the Empire, the French soldiers called the German soldiers, especially the Austrians, "*Kaiserlichs*." By using the term, Ludovic means, "Do you think he does not understand French?"

will. He did not submit to this proof of weakness with which you reproach him, when he himself, depressed by illness, gasped for free air, crushed between his prison walls, like his plant between the stones. No ! But mutual obligations, solemn pledges have been exchanged between them ; she saved him from death ; he must needs save her in turn !

Old Girhardi saw Charney striding up and down, with every sign of expectation and impatience. How long the answer seemed in coming ! Three hours had passed since his message to the governor, and meantime the plant was perishing from the loss of sap. Charney would have seen his own blood flow with more composure, no doubt.

The old man tried to comfort and encourage him ; more familiar than he with plants and their diseases, he told him how to close Picciola's wounds, to rescue her from one at least of the dangers which beset her.

By his advice Charney made a mixture of wet earth and straw chopped fine and applied it to the wounds. His handkerchief, torn into strips, supplied him with bandages to hold it in place.

In these occupations another hour passed ; but still no answer came.

At dinner time, when Ludovic appeared, his curt and bustling manner boded no good news. He scarcely deigned to answer the prisoner with a few short, sharp words. " Wait, *diavolo* ! You are in a great hurry ! Give him time to write ! "

He seemed to foresee the part that he was to play in all this, and to prepare for it in advance.

Charney ate no dinner.

He tried to wait patiently for Picciola's sentence of life or death, and he tried to argue with himself that the governor could not refuse so simple a request, unless he was a very cruel man.

But delay made him more and more impatient; he was amazed, as if the commandant might not have anything more important to do. At the slightest sound his eyes turned to the narrow door, through which he hoped to see the coming of an answer to his message.

Evening came; nothing! Night fell . . . nothing! He could not close his eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

NEXT day the eagerly awaited answer reached him. The commander informed him, in a dry, laconic style, that no change could be made in the walls, moats, or fortifications of the citadel, without express permission from the governor of Turin ; that he would refer M. Charney's request to His Excellency ; for, he added, "*the pavement of a prison yard is also to be regarded as a wall.*"

Charney stood amazed. To make a State question of the existence of a flower ! A breach in the fortifications ! Await the decision of the Governor of Turin ! Wait a century, when a day might mean death ! Might not the governor in turn refer to the minister, the minister to the senate, the senate to the Emperor ? All his contempt for mankind revived suddenly ! Ludovic himself seemed only the tool of his tormentor.

He approached the sufferer, whose lustre was tarnished, whose colors were dimmed. He gazed at her sadly. Her fragrance no longer indicates the true time of day, like a watch when the spring breaks ; the blossoms, drooping and hanging their heads, have ceased to turn towards the sun, as a dying girl closes her eyes that she may not see the lover whom she fears to regret too much.

Amid his despairing thoughts he heard the voice of the old companion of his captivity :

"Dear sir," said the good old man in his fatherly tones, dropping his voice and bending his head to the lowest bars of his window in order to get as close as possible,

"if it dies, and I fear it will die, what will you do here alone, all alone? What tasks will divert you when that which had such charms for you is gone? You, too, will die of weariness; solitude, once interrupted, becomes so hard to bear! You cannot endure it; you feel as I should if I were parted from my child! that guardian angel whose smile consoles me for every grief! As for your plant, some breeze from the Alps, some passing bird, no doubt, dropped a seed in the courtyard; but should a similar chance send you another Picciola it would but renew your regret for the first, for you would continually expect to see it die in the same way. Take my advice; let my friends try; yield to fate. Perhaps freedom is easier of achievement than you think. . . . I hear many instances of the new Emperor's clemency and generosity. He is even now at Turin, and Josephine is with him."

He spoke the name "Josephine" as if it were a sure omen of success.

"At Turin?" interrupted Charney, quickly lifting his head.

"At Turin, for the last two days," repeated the old man, delighted to see that his good advice was not now, as heretofore, unheeded.

"And what is the exact distance from Fenestrella to Turin?"

"By way of Giaveno, Avigliano, and the highroad, it is sixteen miles."

"And how long would it take to go?"

"At least four or five hours; for just now the road must be blocked by troops, coaches and carriages from all the surrounding country, going to attend the festivities.

... The road through the valleys, along the river, is longer, to be sure; but I think it would take less time."

"Tell me, have you any means of communicating with some one outside who will go to Turin to-day . . . before night?"

"My daughter will attend to it."

"And you say that General Bonaparte . . . the . . . first Consul . . ."

"The Emperor," gently suggested Girhardi.

"Yes, the Emperor; the Emperor is still at Turin, you say?" resumed Charney, fairly carried away by a great resolve. "Well, I will write to him, I will send a petition . . . to the Emperor!"

He dwelt on the word as if to strengthen his purpose.

"Oh! thank God!" cried the old man; "for it is He who inspired that good idea and humbled your pride. . . . Yes, write; address your petition for pardon to him; my friends Forsombruni, Coterna, and Delarue will support you warmly, as they would support me, with Minister Marescalchi, Cardinal Caprara, and also with de Melzi, who has just been made keeper of the seals to the new kingdom. Dear comrade, perhaps we may leave this prison together, on the self-same day: you to return to active life, I to follow my daughter whither she will."

"Pardon, sir, pardon, if I do not seem wholly satisfied with the powerful help which you so kindly and unselfishly offer me. My gratitude and my esteem are yours; but my petition must be placed in the hands of the Emperor himself to-night, to-morrow morning at latest. Can you promise me a faithful, trusty messenger?"

"Yes, one I can answer for as for myself!" said the old man after a little thought.

"One question more," added Charney, "do you not fear that you may be compromised by the great service you are to render me?"

"The pleasure of obliging you destroys all fear, dear sir. If I can in any small measure help to lessen your misfortunes, come what may, I can bow to the will of Heaven!"

Charney was moved to his inmost soul by these simple words; he gazed at the old man with tears in his eyes.

"Would that I might clasp your hand!" he said; and he raised his arm to the window. Girhardi stretched his arm through the bars; but in vain; he could not reach the hand that was held toward him. Then, inspired by one of those affectionate impulses so keen in the soul of a recluse, he suddenly untied his cravat, held one end of it and flung the other to Charney, who seized it rapturously, and a double pressure, a double emotion sent a quiver of grateful friendship through the inert rag.

As he again passed Picciola, Charney whispered: "I will save you yet!"

Reëntering his cell, he took the finest and whitest of his handkerchiefs, carefully mended his toothpick, renewed his ink, and set to work. His petition written, which was accomplished not without many pangs to his pride, a slender cord was let down from the grated window on the other side of the yard; Charney fastened his petition to it and the string was drawn up.

An hour later the person charged with the office of handing the paper to the Emperor set off with a guide

through the valleys of Suza, Bussolino, and St. George, along the right bank of the Doria-Riparia; both were on horseback; but in spite of all their haste, unlooked-for obstacles delayed them. Recent rains had washed out the road, the river had overflowed in several places, and it was not until far on in the evening that they reached Turin.

There they learned that the Emperor-King had left for Alexandria.¹

¹ A fortified town in Northern Italy.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

NEXT day, with the earliest dawn, the city of Alexandria was in festal array. Vast crowds thronged the streets, carpeted and dressed with flowers and flags. The crowd moved from the town hall, where Napoleon and Josephine were lodged, to the triumphal arch erected at the end of the avenue, which they would traverse to visit the famous field of Marengo.

There was to take place the most important feature of the day. The Emperor Napoleon would take part in a sham fight, in commemoration of the victory won on that very spot five years before by First Consul Bonaparte.

Up and down the long street of the village of Marengo all the houses, turned into taverns, afford a lively scene of bustle and confusion.

At every window, to attract and tempt purchasers, hang smoked hams, sausages, garlands of red partridges and quails, strings of potato balls and sweetmeats. Frenchmen and Italians, soldiers and civilians come and go, push and crowd; heaps of macaroni, pyramids of almond cakes, Italian paste and tartlets vanish before the army of customers.

Up and down the dark, narrow staircases moves a double line of people; some, loaded with their supplies, to hide

them from the greed of their neighbors, hold their arms high above their heads, and, in the darkness, a hand nimbler than their own snatches a dainty morsel, a buttered roll, a handful of oranges or figs, a small Turin ham, or a larded quail, or even a pie, or a tureen of stewed meat; dish and contents, all are taken; and there are shouts, jokes, and endless laughter from the first step to the last. The robber in the ascending line, content with his gains, turns about and tries to descend; he who was robbed, forced to return to the source of supplies, tries to remount, and the entire band, moved by this ebb and flow, swaying hither and thither amidst outbursts of merriment, oaths, and haphazard blows, are driven forth, some into the streets, some to the tavern, where tipsy men are already bawling and shouting.

Between the tables loaded with food and the benches loaded with guests, from room to room, move the mistress and the maidservants; the former with colored aprons, powdered hair, and the coquettish little dagger, still the chief ornament of the national attire; the latter in short skirts, with long braids of hair, neck, breast, and ears loaded with imitation jewels, and their feet bare.

Other scenes, other sounds will soon take the place of these lively pictures, these songs and shouts, this clash of plates and glasses.

In an hour the cannon will roar, harmless cannon, indeed, which will do no more than break a few window-panes; the street will ring with the shouts of soldiers, and the houses will vanish in the smoke of . . . blank cartridges.

A gorgeous throne, surrounded by tricolored flags, is

already prepared on one of the hills overlooking the field; troops are already falling into position. Trumpets sound the cavalry call, and the roll of the drum is heard on every hand; flags flutter in the breeze, and the sun, the favored guest of Napoleonic feasts, shines forth and strikes fire from the gold of embroideries, the bronze of cannon, the helmets, cuirasses, and the sixty thousand bayonets with which the field is bristling.

Erelong the curious mob is driven back by the troops which pour in in double quick time; the village is deserted; men are hurrying in every direction, interrupted in their sports or their feasts; and women, alarmed by the flash of swords or the neighing of horses, drag their children out of the way.

The chief incidents of the dreadful day of June 14, 1800, are to be rehearsed; but pains will be taken to omit any mistakes that may have been made, for this is intended as a skilful piece of flattery, a madrigal in cannonades for the new Emperor and King.

All at once the drums beat a salute; shouts and cheers are heard on every hand; swords flash, clouds of dust arise, guns clink as if by a common impulse, and a showy carriage, drawn by eight horses and decked with the arms of Italy and France, bears Josephine and Napoleon to the foot of their throne!

The latter, after receiving the homage of deputations from all parts of Italy, envoys from Lucca, Genoa, Florence, Rome, and even from Prussia, chafing at inaction, springs on his horse, and the whole plain is soon lit up with flames and covered with smoke.

Such were the sports of the young conqueror!

An officer, chosen by the Emperor, explained the secret of these evolutions and the purpose of these movements to Josephine, left alone on her throne and almost terrified by the spectacle.

As he spoke, Josephine noticed a slight stir close by. Asking the cause, she learned that a young girl who had rashly broken through the ranks, at the risk of being trampled underfoot by the cavalry, or crushed beneath the wheels of an ammunition wagon, had made this stir by her obstinate insistence upon speaking with Her Majesty, in spite of the resistance of the guards and the remonstrances of the maids of honor.

CHAPTER II.

ON hearing that the Emperor had left Turin for Alexandria, Girhardi's daughter, Teresa, for it was she, who, with a guide, carried Charney's petition, was at first overcome and almost discouraged. But she soon remembered that in her hands was the joy, the only hope of a poor prisoner. The Count had no idea who had undertaken the perilous task. Unmindful, therefore, of weather or of fatigue, she resolved to keep on, and told her guide that Alexandria and not Turin was to be their goal.

"Ho! ho!" said the guide, scratching his ear. "Why, that is twice the distance that we have already come."

"Well! then we must set off at once."

"So I will, *Signora*," he quietly rejoined; "but it will be to turn my back on Alexandria as well as Turin! Half-way to Rivoli I have a cousin whose daughter is to be married; he may as well keep me and my horses for nothing; it will be so much saved, to say nothing of the fun."

And when she objected he replied: "I do not refuse to take you back to Fenestrella to-morrow morning, as agreed; will that suit you? No? *Buon viaggio, Signora!*"¹

Nothing that she could say would move him. His purpose was fixed.

Resolved to keep on her way, Teresa begged the mistress of the inn where she had put up, to procure her some conveyance to Alexandria as soon as possible. The land-

¹ A pleasant journey to you, Madam.

lady sent her men to search the city, but in vain; public coaches, carriages, beasts of burden, saddle or pack saddle, all had been taken long ago, on account of the festivities at Alexandria.

Teresa was in despair. She stood on the doorstep, lost in thought, when the noise of wheels and the sound of bells fell upon her ear. Two strong mules drew up before her, harnessed to a peddler's big wagon. The peddler and his wife, dismounting from their seat, heaved sighs of satisfaction, stamped their feet, stretched their arms, and, greeting the landlady as an old acquaintance, they made themselves at home on the hearth, warming their hands at the crackling fire of vine branches; then they ordered their mules to be put in the stable and supper to be brought, intending to go to bed as soon as possible.

Teresa gazed anxiously at the couple, as if her only help lay in them. Unused to depend upon herself, she stood hesitating to address them, when the maid offered her a candle and a key, pointing to the room which she was to occupy.

Recalled to a sense of her position, she waved aside the servant, and, timidly advancing to the table, said in a trembling voice: "Forgive my asking you, but which way are you going from Turin?"

"Towards Alexandria, my pretty maid."

"Alexandria! my good angel must have brought you here!"

"Your good angel brought us by very bad roads, *Signora*," said the woman; "and we are worn out."

"Well, what can we do for you?" said the peddler.

"Urgent business takes me to Alexandria; can you carry me there?"

"Impossible!" said the woman.

"Oh! I will pay you well! Ten crowns!"

"It's no easy matter," said the man. "In the first place, the seat on the wagon is small; it will hardly hold three. To be sure, you would not take up much room; but there is another difficulty. We are going to the fair at Revignano, near Asti, and not to Alexandria. It is halfway, and that is all."

"Well!" said Teresa, "take me as far as Asti; but we must start to-night, at once."

"Impossible! impossible!" repeated the pair.

"I will double the price!"

Husband and wife looked inquiringly at each other.

"No, no!" said the woman; "it would be enough to make us ill; besides, Losca and Zoppa¹ are dead beat. Do you want to kill them?"

"Twenty crowns!" muttered the man. "Twenty crowns!"

"Losca and Zoppa are worth more than that."

However, the thought of the twenty crowns finally overcame their reluctance and the mules were again put to the wagon.

Teresa, wrapped in her cloak, settled herself as best she might on the seat between the husband and wife, and they set out just as the clocks of Turin were striking eleven.

In her impatience to reach her journey's end, she would fain have been borne by steeds as swift as the wind; the mules plodded along slowly, lifting one foot after the other. At last she took upon herself to suggest that it

¹ Names of the mules.

was important for her to reach Asti promptly, in order that she might be at Alexandria by morning.

"My pretty miss," replied her new guide, "I am as loath to pass the night in counting the stars as you are, but a merchant must look to his wares. I have a stock of earthenware and china to sell at Revignano, and if my mules went any faster, they might smash all my wares to atoms."

Teresa reproached herself bitterly for not asking sooner how long it would take to get to Asti; she blamed herself particularly for not seeking some speedier means of transportation while in Turin, being familiar with the city as she was; but there was nothing now to be done but to submit.

The wagon pursued its accustomed course. Losca and Zoppa moved no faster nor slower; the peddler and his wife, who had talked a good deal about the prospects of trade, were now silent; and in the darkness, in spite of the painful numbness of her feet, due to cold, Teresa was lulled into a doze by the monotonous tinkle of the mule bells. Her head swayed from right to left, by turns seeking a pillow on the shoulder of the woman and the man.

"Lean on me," said her driver, "and rest well, my pretty miss."

She took his advice, made herself as comfortable as she could, and fell sound asleep.

The brightness of dawn alone made her open her eyes. Surprised to find herself in the open air on the highroad, on looking about her she saw with terror and surprise that the wagon was at a standstill. The peddler, his wife, and the mules were all sound asleep. Close at hand were

spires and houses, and early morning mists displayed to her the beautiful mountain scenery of the country near Turin.

"Merciful Heaven!" she cried, "where are we? Day is breaking and we have scarcely passed the outskirts of the town!"

The peddler waked at her exclamation and, rubbing his eyes, tried to reassure her.

"We are close to Asti," he said, "and the spires that you see are those of Revignano. You need not scold Losca and Zoppa; they have only indulged in a short nap, and they needed it sadly."

And he cracked his whip so loudly that both his wife and the mules started up.

At the gates of Asti the good crockery merchant took leave of Teresa, crossed himself with the money which she gave him, and wishing her a successful journey, turned about and retraced his steps to Revignano.

Half the journey was now accomplished! On entering Asti she expected to find the entire population on foot, making ready to go to Alexandria; but what was her surprise to find the streets deserted. Kneeling before a figure of the Virgin enshrined in the wall, she prayed for help and strength. Just as she rose to her feet she heard steps, and a man appeared.

"Please tell me, sir," she said, "where I shall find carriages for Alexandria."

"It is very late, my fair maid," was the reply; "they were all engaged several days ago."

And he passed on.

A second and a third appeared, a fourth and yet a fifth, who gave no more satisfactory replies. At last, as a spe-

cial favor, she obtained a seat as far as Ancona, from where it was engaged by another traveller.

Between Ancona and Felizano she met with fresh vexations and difficulties, but triumphed over everything.

When she reached Alexandria she was already aware that the Emperor was no longer there ; without a moment's pause, therefore, she joined the crowd, all moving on foot towards Marengo. Crushed by the throng of sightseers, she hurried on as best she might in heat and dust, heedless of the shouts and mirth about her, her serious face in strange contrast to the general joy.

But a stoppage in the crowd in front of her compelling her to slacken her pace, she had time for thought. She remembers her father, who will be alarmed by her delay ; she thinks of Charney accusing his messenger of neglect. Her hand moves to her bosom as if the petition might have dropped from its hiding place. Then her father appears before her again and a tear dims her eye, but her sad thoughts are interrupted by loud shouts of joy.

A vast space is formed about her, two hands seize hers on either side, and in spite of her resistance, her fatigue, and her melancholy mood, she is forced to figure in a lively dance which whirls along the road, enlisting lads and lasses as they pass.

This was not the least painful incident of her journey. But she kept up her courage, for she had almost reached the goal.

Freed from this strange encounter, she finally comes in sight of the plain ; and her eye, after roaming over the noble army arrayed on the field of Marengo, lights up when it rests on the imperial throne.

All her strength, loyalty, and enthusiasm revive ! But how is she to reach the throne through these myriads of men and horses ?

The foremost ranks of the crowd had encroached so rapidly on the plain that they threatened to invade the battlefield. A body of horsemen rode forward, and brandishing their swords, their chargers plunging and rearing, they drove the mob back within bounds.

Teresa, pale, trembling, but instinctively directing her course towards the throne, was taken off her feet, borne away by the rush. She closed her eyes in terror, like a child who imagines the danger is over when he ceases to see it, clung to a tree, and remained there motionless.

So rapid was the retreat of the people before the advance of the troops, that when she raised her head and looked about, she found herself alone in a thicket of trees, among which trickled a tiny stream. Gazing in the opposite direction, she saw through the foliage, not three hundred paces away, the throne upon which sat Josephine and Napoleon.

Teresa takes courage ; the moment is at hand. She parts the branches to step forth ; but as she does so, with a start of confusion and shame she thinks of her untidy appearance. Her hair is unbraided and hangs about her shoulders, her hands and face are covered with dust and dirt. To appear thus before the rulers of France and Italy would be to court a refusal !

She retreats into the thicket once more, stoops to the brook, unties her broad-brimmed straw hat, shakes out her dark hair, braids it, smooths her neck kerchief, then washes face and hands in the stream, and utters a fervent prayer to Heaven for her father and for Charney.

As she again watches for an opportune moment for her passage, loud reports are heard on every hand. The ground seems to shake, the birds fly up from the trees, uttering shrill cries, and take refuge in the woods of Volpedo and the shades of Voghera.

The battle has begun.

Teresa, deafened by the roar of the cannon, terrified by the din, stood stunned, her eyes riveted on the throne, now visible and now hidden by a moving screen of bayonets and lances.

After a space, when every thought save that of instinctive horror seemed to leave her, her energy returned. She examined more calmly the obstacles in her path and did not consider them insuperable.

Two columns of infantry were engaged in a brisk exchange of shots just beyond the trees which sheltered her. She hoped to make a way for herself under cover of the smoke, but was still hesitating when a troop of thirsty hussars invaded her refuge.

She hesitated no longer; her courage strengthened by a feeling of modesty, she sprang between the two columns of infantry, and as the smoke at that moment cleared away, the soldiers uttered shouts of surprise at seeing in the midst a white petticoat, a woman's hat, a pretty, graceful girl, who kept on her way in spite of their warning cries.

A squadron of cuirassiers was hurrying to support one of the regiments. The captain very nearly knocked Teresa down; but grasping her in his arms just in time, he raised her from the ground, and swearing and cursing, but never stopping to ask by what chance a girl happened to

be there in the thick of the fray, he ordered two soldiers to take her to the women's tent.

She was put on the crupper behind a trooper, and in this way she was conducted to the spot where the ladies of the Empress Josephine, with a few aides-de-camp and the Italian deputies were stationed.

Having reached the goal at last, Teresa could not submit to failure now. She had overcome too many difficulties to yield to the final one; consequently, when, on her demand to speak with the Emperor, she was told that he was riding hither and thither on the field at the head of his troops, she exclaimed resolutely: "Then I must see the Empress!" but the one was no easier than the other. To put an end to her importunity the courtiers strove to intimidate her, but they failed in their attempt. She was then told that she must await the end of the evolutions; she refused and tried to reach the throne. She was held back; she struggled and spoke in tones of such excitement that the attention of Josephine herself was drawn to her.

CHAPTER III.

JOSEPHINE had no sooner issued her orders than the group parted, and Teresa appeared imploring, held back and still struggling to be free.

At a friendly sign from the Empress, all made way for the captive, who, still breathless and disordered by her struggle, sank at the foot of the throne, and hastily drawing a handkerchief from her bosom, cried :

"Madam ! Madam ! A poor prisoner !"

Josephine did not at first understand the meaning of this handkerchief.

"What is it ?" she asked. "Have you a petition to offer me ?"

"This is it, Madam ; this is it ! This is a poor prisoner's petition."

And tears ran down the poor girl's cheeks, while a smile of hope lit up her face. The Empress smiled in return, extended one hand, ordered her to rise, and bending towards her with a look of benevolence :

"Come, come, child, recover yourself. Are you so much interested in this poor prisoner ?"

Teresa blushed and hung her head.

"I never spoke to him," she replied ; "but he is so unfortunate ! Read this, Madam."

Josephine unfolded the handkerchief, was moved at the thought of all the misery and privations attested by this bit of cambric, laboriously written over with a makeshift for ink ; then, pausing at the opening phrase :

"But it is addressed to the Emperor!"

"No matter! Are not you his wife? Read, read, Madam; for Heaven's sake, read! There is no time to be lost!"

The battle had reached its height. The Hungarians, although mowed down by Marmont's artillery, had resumed their dread onslaught. Zach and Desaix were face to face, and their encounter must result in the salvation or the destruction of the army.

Cannon roared on every hand; the battlefield was in a blaze; the shouts of the soldiers, mingled with the trumpet blasts of war, stirred the air like a whirlwind.

The Empress read:

"SIRE, —

"Two paving stones the less in my prison yard will not shake the foundations of your Empire, and such is the only favor which I implore Your Majesty to grant me. It is not for myself that I entreat your protection; but, in this walled desert wherein I expiate my wrongs against you, one creature alone has solaced my grief, one being alone has lent charm to my life. 'T is a plant, Sire, a flower which unexpectedly sprang up between the stones of the yard, where I am at times allowed to breathe the air and look upon the sky. Ah! do not accuse me of delirium and folly! That flower was the object of such sweet and comforting study! Fixed upon it, my eyes were opened to the truth; to it I owe my reason, my rest, perhaps my life! I love it as you love glory!

"As I write, my poor plant is perishing for lack of space and earth; it is dying and I cannot rescue it, and the

commander of Fenestrella refers my petition to the Governor of Turin, and ere they reach a decision, my plant will have perished! To you, Sire, I must therefore turn; to you who with a single word can do all, even save my flower! Order the removal of those two stones which weigh upon my heart as heavily as upon my plant; save it from destruction, save me from despair! Give the order! it is the life of my plant that I implore! I entreat you to grant it; nay, I beg you on my bended knees, and I swear it; the favor shall redound to your credit in my heart.

"Why should it die? It has, I own it, softened the blow which your mighty hand saw fit to deal me; but it has also humbled my pride, and it now brings me suppliant to your feet. Look down upon us from your double throne. Can you understand the bonds that unite a man and a plant in that solitude which deprives a captive of all but a vegetable existence? No, you know nothing of this, Sire, and may your star guard you from ever knowing what captivity can do to the strongest and proudest spirit! I do not complain of mine; I can bear it meekly; prolong it; let it last as long as does my life; but have pity on my plant!

"Remember, Sire, that the favor I implore Your Majesty to grant must be granted at once, this very day! You can hold the sword suspended over the head of the criminal, and then raise it to pardon him; but nature obeys other laws than the justice of man; two days more, and perhaps even the Emperor Napoleon can do nothing for the flower of the prisoner of Fenestrella.

CHARNEY."

There was a sudden burst of artillery; thick smoke covered the field with a dark, yet lurid cloud; then the fires died away, and it seemed as if a hand outstretched from above had suddenly removed the curtain which concealed the combatants.

What a magnificent spectacle in the full blaze of the sun! The brilliant charge which cost Desaix his life was made. Zach and his Hungarians, attacked on their front by Bondet, on their left flank by Kellermann and his cavalry, reeled back in confusion, and the dauntless consul resumed the offensive, overthrew the Imperial troops at every point, and forced Mélas to beat a retreat.

This sudden change of position, these great military movements, this human ebb and flow obedient to the voice of the chief, alone, motionless, in the midst of the apparent disorder, was well fitted to stir the coldest imagination; cheers and shouts rose from the spectators stationed about the throne, and this sound, in contrast to the other sounds which rang in her ears, at last roused the Empress from her deep revery.

For the future Queen of Italy had seen nothing of the brilliant manœuvres, the impressive pictures passing before her; her eyes were still riveted on the strange petition in her hand.

Her first impulse was to encourage the young girl who stood before her.

Teresa, rejoicing in the prospect of success held out by that kindly smile, gratefully and tearfully kissed the frail yet powerful hand which bore Napoleon's marriage ring, and withdrew to the women's tent.

CHAPTER IV.

EVERY word of the petition had roused the sympathy of the Empress-Queen, for Josephine, too, could worship a flower; they were her passion, and she had more than once forgotten the splendor and the cares of state while she watched an opening bud or studied the structure of a blossom in the conservatories at Malmaison.¹

There she had often taken more pleasure in the purple of a cactus than in that of her imperial mantle, and the scent of her magnolias was sweeter to her senses than the venomous flatteries of her courtiers. There she loved to reign supreme, there she gathered under one sceptre a thousand vegetable tribes from all the corners of the earth. She knew them, classified them, enrolled them in order and according to their race.

Like Napoleon, she respected the laws and customs of conquered nations. Plants from all nations found their native climate and soil in her hothouses. It was a world in miniature. In a limited space were rocks and plains, forest and sand, lakes, cascades, and pebbly beaches; one might pass from the heat of the tropics to the cool breezes of the most temperate zones.

When Josephine held an inspection, sweet memories were called up by the sight of certain flowers. The hortensia had lately borrowed the name of her daughter; thoughts of glory came to her too; for after Bonaparte's

¹ Josephine's favorite residence on the banks of the river Seine. She died there in 1814.

triumphs she had claimed her share of the booty, and dreams of Italy and Egypt seemed to rise before her. The Alpine soldanel,¹ the Parma violet, the Pheasant's eye² from Castiglione, the Lodi pink, the willow from the Orient, the Malta Cross,³ the lily of the Nile,⁴ the Syrian hibiscus,⁵ the rose of Damietta, these were her conquests! And of these, at least the greater part still belong to France!

Among all her riches, she had still her favorite flower, the flower of her adoption, the lovely jasmine from Martinique, whose seeds, gathered by her, planted by her, nursed by her, remind her of home, childhood, girlhood, her parents, and her first love for her first husband!⁶

Oh! how well she understood the unhappy man's terrors for his plant! How he must love it! He has but a single one!

And why should she not feel for the poor prisoner's fate? The widow of Beauharnais did not always dwell in a palace. She has not forgotten her days of captivity. And then this Charney, Josephine knew him so calm, so proud, so indifferent to worldly pleasures, such a scoffer at the sweetest human affections! What a change has come over him! What can have bowed that haughty spirit? He who refused to bow even before God now lies prostrate, imploring pity for a plant! Oh! it shall be preserved to him!

¹ *Convolvulus soldanella*.

² *Adonis autumnalis*.

³ *Lychnis Chalcedonica*.

⁴ *Calla Æthiopica*.

⁵ *Hibiscus Syriacus*.

⁶ Viscount de Beauharnais, whom she married at the early age of fifteen, and whose widow she was when she married Bonaparte.

In this state of mind the final manœuvres of the troops, all the vain show of battle, served only to awaken irritation and impatience in her soul; for she dreaded to lose one of those moments so necessary for the existence of the captive's flower.

Accordingly, when Napoleon, surrounded by his generals, rejoined her, expecting her congratulations and still thrilled by those warlike toils which delighted him, she exclaimed, with sparkling eye and eager voice, as if a fresh victory were at stake, and it were now her turn to take the command: "Sire, an order for the commander of Fenestrella! At once, an express!"

And she offered him the handkerchief, outspread in both hands, that he might read it without delay.

Napoleon, measuring her from head to foot, with a glance of displeasure, turned his back and passed on to distribute crosses of the Legion of Honor¹ to the veterans who fought five years before on the self-same field. The chief magistrates of the Cisalpine² Republic were also decorated by him. With Josephine he laid the first stone of a monument in memory of the Battle of Marengo, after which Emperor, Empress, ambassadors, magistrates, civilians, and soldiers returned to Alexandria.

And still Picciola's fate was not decided!

¹ An order of knighthood established by Bonaparte while First Consul, May 19, 1804, to reward military and civil service.

² Founded by Bonaparte in 1797, it contained most of the states of Northern Italy, and lasted till 1805, when it offered Napoleon the title of King of Italy.

CHAPTER V.

THAT evening, after the state dinner, Napoleon and Josephine were in one of the apartments prepared for them in the town hall of Alexandria, the one dictating letters to a secretary, striding up and down, rubbing his hands with a satisfied look; the other before a long mirror, admiring with frank coquetry her elegant dress and her costly ornaments.

When the secretary took his leave, Napoleon sat down, put both elbows on the table covered with red velvet, fringed with gold, leaned his head on his hands, and seemed lost in pleasant musings.

Josephine soon wearied of silence. He had already slighted her once in regard to the petition from Fenestrella, and realizing that her request had been ill-timed, she determined to choose a more favorable moment.

She thought that it had now come, and, seating herself at the opposite side of the table, she leaned upon it, in imitation of her husband, affecting a similar abstraction, and soon both looked up and smiled.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Josephine caressingly.

"I was thinking," he replied, "that a diadem becomes you well, and that it would be a pity had I omitted to add one to your casket."

Josephine's smile slowly faded. Napoleon's smile became more pronounced, for he loved to combat the terrors which she could not but feel when she thought of the

height to which they had attained. It was not for herself she trembled, noble woman!

"Would you not rather have me an emperor than a general?" he added.

"To be sure, for an emperor may grant favors and I have one to beg."

It was now the husband's turn to frown and that of the wife to smile. He feared lest Josephine's influence should lead him into dangerous weaknesses.

"Again! Josephine, you promised never again to interfere with the course of justice! Do you think that the power to pardon is only ours that we may gratify the caprices of our heart?"

"Sire," returned Josephine, restraining a burst of laughter, "I am sure you will grant the favor which I beg of Your Majesty."

"I doubt it!"

"And I do not. First and foremost, I request the removal of two . . . oppressors! Yes, Sire, let them be dismissed! Let them be torn from their places if need be!"

So saying, she pressed her handkerchief to her lips; for as she saw Napoleon's look of amazement she could no longer control her mirth.

"What! do you spur me on to punishment, you, Josephine? and to whom do you refer?"

"To two paving stones, Sire, which are in the way in a courtyard."

And the laughter, with such difficulty restrained, burst forth at last. He rose, and folding his arms hastily behind him, stared at her with suspicion and surprise.

"What! what is the meaning of this? Two paving stones! are you joking?"

"No!" said she; and rising in her turn, coming close to him, and leaning with clasped hands on his shoulder, with her graceful Creole ease: "a precious life hangs on those two stones. Heed me well, Sire, for it requires all your good-will to understand me."

She then told him the story of the petition and all she had learned from Teresa concerning the prisoner, without giving his name, however; and she told him of the girl's devotion; then turning to the prisoner and his flower, and to the love he bore it, words flowed from her lips, sweet, tender, caressing, full of that charm and eloquence so natural to her.

As he listened the Emperor smiled, and as he smiled he admired his wife.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARNEY counted the hours, the minutes, the seconds. He felt as if the tiniest divisions of time were heaped one upon the other to crush his flower and break it. Two days had passed; no news yet; even the old man, anxious and alarmed in turn, could not explain this silence, this delay; he suggested obstacles, he answered for the loyalty and zeal of the messenger (but did not mention his daughter), and strove to revive in his comrade's heart the hope which was fading from his own.

The third day passed, and yet his daughter did not come.

Throughout the fourth day, Girhardi did not appear at his window. Charney did not see him; but had he lent an attentive ear, he might have heard the poor father's mingled sobs and prayers.

The plant advanced steadily in its process of dissolution, and Charney, inconsolable, watched Picciola's last agony. He had double cause for depression; he must lose the joy of his life, the object of his care, and he had humbled himself to no purpose!

As if all had conspired against him, Ludovic, once so open and so free, now avoided speaking to him. Silent and sullen, he came and went, smoking his pipe, scarcely looking at him, and seeming to have a grudge against him for his misfortune.

When dinner time came, Ludovic found Charney lost in sad musings over his plant. He carefully avoided address-

ing him cheerfully as of yore, crossing the yard rapidly, pretending to think that Charney was in his cell. But all at once their eyes met, and Ludovic paused, amazed at the changed aspect of the prisoner.

Longing and waiting had furrowed his brow; his colorless lips, his thin cheeks gave him an air of depression, made more striking by his disordered hair and beard. In spite of himself, Ludovic was painfully startled, but, recalling his resolves no doubt, he turned his eyes from the man to the plant, winked ironically, shrugged his shoulders, whistled a tune, and was about to retire, when a sad but expressive voice asked: "What have I done to you, Ludovic?"

"To me? . . . to me? . . . Nothing," replied the gaoler, embarrassed by this reproachful tone and more moved than he was willing to show.

"Then," rejoined the Count, moving towards him, and quickly grasping his hand, "let us save her! It is not too late, and I have found out a way. Yes! the commandant cannot be alarmed. He need never know it. Get me some earth, an empty box; . . . we will take up the stones, but only for an instant. . . . Who will ever know? We can transplant it."

"Pooh! pooh! pooh!" said Ludovic, hastily withdrawing his hand; "the devil take the flower! She has injured us all quite enough, beginning with you, who look as if you would fall ill again. Turn her into herb tea; that is all she is good for!"

Charney gave him a look of scorn and anger.

"If she did no one but you a mischief," continued Ludovic, "that's your own business; it's all very well!

but that poor man whom you have robbed of his daughter, . . . he is not to see her again, and he owes it to you !”

“His daughter ! What do you mean ?” . . . cried the Count.

“Yes, that’s it, what do I mean ?” resumed the gaoler, putting down his basket of provisions, folding his arms, and assuming the attitude of a man about to utter a sharp rebuke. “You whip the horses and you expect the carriage to stand still ! You strike a blow and wonder at the wound ! *Trondédious ! O che frascheria !*¹ You chose to write to the Emperor, and you did write to him ; so far so good. It was against the commandant’s orders ; he will punish you as he sees fit, that’s but fair. But you wanted a messenger to carry your letter, as you could not carry it yourself. That messenger was the ‘*giovanna*.’ ”²

“What ! that young girl. . . . Was it she ?”

“Now pretend to be astonished, do ! Did you suppose your correspondence with the Emperor would go by telegraph ? The government has other uses for that. . . . The fact is that the commandant has found out everything. . . . I don’t know how ; . . . through the guide, no doubt ; for the ‘*giovanna*’ could not wander over the roads alone. Now the door of the prison is closed against her. She and her father are parted. And whose fault is it ?”

Charney hid his face in his hands.

“Miserable old man !” he exclaimed ; “his only consolation ! . . . And does he know it ?”

“He has known everything since yesterday. You may fancy how he feels towards you. But your dinner is getting cold.”

¹ What nonsense !

² Young woman.

And he took up the basket and carried it into the prisoner's cell.

The Count sank upon his bench. For a moment he felt like being done with Picciola at once, and destroying her with his own hand ; but his heart failed him. Besides, a ray of hope still shone faintly before him. That poor girl who so generously sacrificed herself for him, and whose eagerness to help a poor wretch has been so cruelly punished, has returned ; perhaps she succeeded in reaching the Emperor after all. Yes, that must be it ! That has enraged the commandant ! But if he holds the order for Picciola's delivery, why does he delay ? He must needs obey, if the Emperor commands ! " Oh, bless you, noble girl ! poor girl, parted from your father ! . . . for my sake ! Oh ! I would give half my life for you, . . . for your pleasure. I would give it willingly, . . . only to throw the door of this prison open to you ! "

CHAPTER VII.

A HALF hour had scarcely passed, when two officers wearing sashes of the national colors, red, white, and blue, appeared, followed by the commander of Fenestrella, and requested Charney to return to his cell.

There, the commandant was first to speak.

He was a stout man with big, bald head and thick, gray moustaches. A scar starting at the left eyebrow cut his face in halves and stopped at the upper lip, which it slightly impaired. A long, blue coat with full skirts, buttoned from top to bottom, top-boots drawn over his trousers, a sprinkling of powder on his hair, which was braided on either side in the old-fashioned way, and spurs to his boots (no doubt as a mark of distinction, for owing to rheumatism as well as to the onerous duties of his position, he was actually the greatest prisoner in the fortress), — such was the outward appearance of this personage, whose only weapon was a cane.

Having the custody of political prisoners, most of whom were of noble family, he prided himself on his good breeding, in spite of his frequent bursts of temper, and on his elegant diction, in spite of certain unfortunate peculiarities of pronunciation. He carried himself erect, had a loud, emphatic voice, flourished his arm when saluting, and scratched his head while he talked. Thus fashioned, Colonel Morand, in command at Fenestrella, might still have passed for what is called a fine figure of a soldier.

From the courteous tone which he at first assumed, and the official air of his two companions, Charney thought that they had brought him Picciola's pardon.

The colonel asked him to say whether he had ever acted unhandsomely towards him, in the exercise of his duty, either by lack of care or by abuse of power.

This preface sounded well. Charney protested all that he could in his favor.

"You know, sir, that when you were ill, every attention was lavished upon you; if you did not choose to follow the prescriptions of the doctors, the fault was neither theirs nor mine. I thought that fresh air and exercise might hasten your recovery, and you were allowed almost entire liberty to come and go in your courtyard."

Charney bowed as if to thank him; but he was devoured by impatience.

"And yet, sir," resumed the colonel in the tone of a man whose delicacy has been wounded, his attentions ignored, "you have broken the ordinary rules of the establishment, with which you must have been familiar; you have come near compromising me with the Governor of Piedmont, General Menou, and even with the Emperor, by forwarding a petition to His Majesty."

"Forwarding! then he has received it?" interrupted Charney.

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

And he quivered with impatience.

"Well," replied the commandant, "for so doing you will be transferred to one of the cells in the old bastion, where you will remain in close confinement for a month."

"But tell me," cried Charney, still trying to struggle against the cruel reality which robbed him of his last illusions, "what did the Emperor say?"

"The Emperor cannot attend to such nonsense!" was the contemptuous reply.

Charney sank upon the only chair with which his cell was provided and paid little heed to what followed.

"That is not all. Your means of communication known, your relations with the outside discovered, it is natural to suppose that your correspondence was carried farther. Have you written to any one besides His Majesty?"

Charney made no answer.

"A careful search has been ordered," added the colonel in a harsher tone, "and these gentlemen, appointed by the Governor of Turin, will proceed to make it in your presence, as the law directs. Before carrying out this order, have you anything to say? Confession will do much to help your cause."

The same silence on the prisoner's part.

The colonel frowned, and turning to his companions he said :

"Proceed!"

The two at once began to search every nook and corner from the chimney and the mattress to the inner lining of the Count's clothes.

Meantime the colonel, pacing up and down the narrow cell, tapped the flagstones with his cane, to see if they contained a secret hiding place for important papers, or even the preparations for flight, which would not be difficult, as Fenestrella was anything but a secure prison.

Since 1796 it had been a partial ruin, and but a few soldiers were left to guard its outer walls.

After a prolonged search, nothing suspicious was found but a small glass bottle filled with blackish liquid, no doubt the prisoner's ink.

When asked as to how he got this ink, he turned his chair to the window and began to drum on the panes, without replying to the question.

Only the dressing case remained to be examined. He was asked for the key.

He flung it on the floor.

Colonel Morand choked with indignation. His face crimson, his eyes flashing, he strode up and down, buttoning and unbuttoning his coat with trembling hands, as if to restrain his fury.

Suddenly, with one accord, the two police spies occupied in searching the dressing case, one holding it, the other fumbling over it, ran to the window for more light and rapturously shouted :

"We have it ! We have it !"

Pulling from a secret drawer a number of handkerchiefs, blackened all over with fine, close characters, they imagine that they have hit upon the proofs of a vast conspiracy.

Seeing his precious records profaned, Charney springs up, puts forth his hand to grasp them, opens his lips, . . . then, recovering his composure, he sits down again without a word.

But his first impulse to rescue, was enough to lead the commandant to attach great value to the capture.

By his order the handkerchiefs are at once tied up and sealed ; even the bottle and the toothpick pen are confis-

cated. A report is drawn up. Charney, being asked to sign it in proof that it is correct, refuses by a shake of his head.

This refusal is set down, and he is commanded to go at once to the cell in the old bastion.

Oh ! how sad, how vague, and how confused were his thoughts ! His only feeling was one of grief and pain. He had not even a smile of contempt to bestow on the triumph of those men, so proud to bear off his observations on his plant, as legal evidence, as proof of a plot ! He was forever parted from his memories ! The lover robbed of the letters and portrait of an adored ladylove whom he is never again to see, can alone understand the prisoner's agony. To save Picciola he has imperilled his honor and his pride ; he has broken an old man's heart and ruined a young girl's life ; and of all which reconciled him to life nothing is left him, not even the lines which he had written and which summed up his blest studies.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOSEPHINE'S intercession was not so powerful as it promised to be. After her gentle plea in favor of the prisoner and his plant, when she placed the handkerchief with its petition in Napoleon's hands, he recalled the strange lack of attention, so offensive to his pride, which the Empress had shown that morning during the warlike sport at Marengo, and Charney's signature added to the disagreeable impression.

"Has the fellow gone mad?" he said, "and what trick is he trying to play on me? A Jacobin a botanist?¹ I think I still hear Marat² enlarge upon the beauties of rural scenery, or see Couthon³ appear at the Convention with a rose in his buttonhole!"

Josephine would have objected to the title of Jacobin, so lightly applied to the noble Count, but just then a chamberlain entered and informed the Emperor that generals, ambassadors, and Italian deputies were waiting for him in the drawing-room. He at once joined them and availed himself of Charney's name and petition to make a vigorous assault upon philosophers and Jacobins, whom he vowed he would bring to unconditional terms. Quick to

¹ Jacobin, a member of the club of the Friends of the Constitution, who in 1789 held meetings in a Dominican Convent in the Rue St. Jacques, Paris.

² Famous Terrorist, editor of the "*Friend of the People*," killed by Charlotte Corday, 1793.

³ Another Terrorist, guillotined 1794, after the fall of his friend and leader, Robespierre.

profit by circumstances, he raised his voice resolutely and threateningly, not that he was as excited as he pretended to be, but he wished his words to be heard and repeated, especially by the Prussian ambassador.

This was his act of divorce from the cause of the Revolution.

Josephine, alarmed for a moment by the storm that she had caused, soon recovered from her fears, and whispered half mockingly in Napoleon's ear : " Oh, Sire, why such a tempest ? There is no question of Jacobins here or of revolutionists, but only of a poor flower which never conspired against any one."

The Emperor shrugged his shoulders.

" Do they think to deceive me with such nonsense ? " he exclaimed. " This Charney is a dangerous fellow and no fool ! The flower is a mere pretext, . . . the object to take up the paving stones. He is preparing to escape ! Look out for him, Menou. And how does it happen that the fellow writes to me without sending his petition through the colonel's hands ? Is this the discipline in your state prisons ? "

The Empress made another effort to defend her favorite.

" Enough, madam ! " said the master.

Menou, reproved by the Emperor, was not chary of blame with the colonel in command at Fenestrella ; and the latter, in his turn, was quick to avenge himself on the prisoners to whom he owed so sharp a reprimand.

Girhardi's cell was searched, but nothing suspicious was found. His daughter, however, was forbidden to revisit her father.

As for the Count, he was destined to undergo even

more painful emotions than those caused by the seizure of his manuscripts.

When he stepped into the courtyard on his way to his new cell, in the train of the colonel and his acolytes, the colonel's rage seemed to be redoubled by the sight of the frail scaffolding about the plant, either because he had not noticed it before or because he wished to punish Charney for his obstinate silence.

"What is all that?" he said to Ludovic, who came at his call. "Is this the way you look out for your prisoners?"

"That, colonel," the gaoler replied with a grunt of hesitation, taking his pipe from his mouth and lifting his hand to his cap in salute; "that's the plant I told you about; . . . the one that is so good for gout and such-like troubles."

"The devil!" said the colonel, "if these gentlemen are allowed to have their way, the cells and courtyards of the citadel will be turned into gardens, menageries, and wine shops! Come! root up that weed and all that rubbish about it!"

Ludovic looked at the plant, at Charney, and at the colonel; he tried to utter a few words of excuse.

"Hold your tongue!" cried the colonel, "and do as I bid you!"

Ludovic said no more. He again took his pipe from his mouth, put it out, emptied it, laid it on a ledge, and made ready to obey his orders. He took off his jacket and his cap and rubbed his hands to work up his courage. All at once, as if the colonel's rage were contagious, he tore up the matting, plucked it apart, and flung it about the yard in a sort of fury. Next came the stakes; he

broke them over his knee and hurled them away. His old love for Picciola seemed changed to hate; he seemed avenging himself for some fancied wrong.

Charney stood rooted to the spot, his eyes eagerly riveted on his plant, as if his gaze could still protect her.

The day had been cool, the sky overcast; the plant had revived during the day, and from the midst of the withered branches sprang tiny green shoots. It was as if Picciola were gathering strength to die!

What! Picciola, his Picciola! His real world and his ideal world, the pivot of his existence, must perish! What would fill his sad leisure now? What would fill his empty heart? No more plans, no more studies, no more sweet dreams, no experiments to note down, nothing to love! Oh! how narrow his prison walls would be! How oppressive the air! It would be but a tomb! Picciola's tomb!

Just then he saw a shadow at the little grated window. It was the old man!

"Ah!" he thought, "I have robbed him of his only joy, I have parted him from his daughter! He has come to enjoy my anguish, to curse me, no doubt! I cannot blame him, for what is my misery in comparison with his despair?"

He dared not raise his eyes to implore pardon of the only man whose esteem he cared to retain; he feared to read on that noble face signs of merited reproach or scorn; but when their eyes met, the look of tender pity addressed to him by the poor father, forgetting his own sorrows in those of his companion in misfortune, stirred him to the soul, and two tears, the only tears he ever shed, stole from his eyes.

Those tears were sweet ; but a remnant of pride led him to wipe them away hastily. He would not be suspected of weakness by those about him.

Of all the witnesses to this scene, the two police spies alone seemed not to understand the drama enacted before them. They stared by turns at the prisoner, the old man, the colonel, and the gaoler, amazed at the emotion stamped upon their features, and wondering if some precious treasure lay buried beneath so well barricaded a flower.

But the fatal work went on. Urged by the colonel, Ludovic tried to remove the supports of the rustic seat, but they resisted his efforts.

"An axe, take an axe !" cried the colonel.

Ludovic took one ; it fell from his hand.

"Confound you, be done with it !" said the colonel.

At the first blow, the bench yielded ; at the third, it was in fragments. Then Ludovic stooped to the plant, left standing alone amidst the wreck.

The Count was pale and hollow-eyed ; sweat poured from his brow.

"Sir, sir ! Why kill it ? It will soon die in any case," he cried at last, humbled once more to play the suppliant.

The colonel looked at him, smiled satirically, and in his turn made no reply.

"Very well !" exclaimed Charney ; "I will do it ! I will tear it up with my own hand !"

"I forbid you !" said the colonel in his gruff voice ; and he stretched his cane like a barrier between Charney and his companion. Then, at his imperative sign, Ludovic grasped Picciola in both hands to uproot her from the earth.

Charney, dismayed, utterly crushed, again riveted his eyes upon her.

Close to the ground where the sap still ran, a tiny flower had bloomed, bright and many-hued. The other blossoms already hung dejected on their withered stalks. This one alone still lived; it alone was not crushed and stifled by the gaoler's big, rough hands. It turned towards Charney. He fancied he inhaled its perfume, and his eyes wet with tears, he saw it glitter, disappear, and again appear.

Man and plant exchanged a last look of farewell.

If at this moment when so many interests and emotions centered about a frail plant, strangers had appeared suddenly in the prison yard, on beholding the scene before them, those officers decked in tricolored scarfs, the colonel pronouncing his merciless decree, would they not have thought they saw some secret, bloody execution, where Ludovic played the hangman's part, and Charney that of the criminal who has just heard his sentence? Such strangers are at hand! They are here!

One is an aide-de-camp of General Menou; the other a page of the Empress. The dust which covers them shows that they have made good speed. And it was high time!

At the sound of their footsteps, Ludovic released Picciola, raised his head, and Charney and he looked into each other's eyes. Both of them were as pale as ashes!

The aide-de-camp handed Colonel Morand an order from the Governor of Turin; the colonel read it, hesitated, walked up and down, compared the message just received with that received the night before; then, raising his eyebrows repeatedly in token of his great surprise, he affects

a semi-courteous air, approaches Charney, and graciously hands him the general's letter.

The prisoner read aloud :

"His Majesty the Emperor and King commands me to inform you that he grants Mr. Charney's application, relating to the plant which grows between the paving stones of his prison. Those which interfere with it may be removed. I desire you to see that this order is carried out, and to arrange with Mr. Charney on this head."

"Long live the Emperor!" shouts Ludovic.

"Long live the Emperor!" murmurs another voice, which seems to issue from the wall.

While Charney read, the colonel leaned on his cane, as if to keep himself in countenance; the two men with the scarfs, still unable to understand the meaning of all this, seemed mystified; the aide-de-camp and the page wondered why they had been sent there in such hot haste. Finally the page, turning to Charney, said :

"There is a postscript from the Empress."

And Charney read upon the margin :

"I recommend Mr. Charney to the special consideration of Colonel Morand. I shall be particularly grateful to the colonel for all that he may do to alleviate the condition of his prisoner.

[*Signed*]

JOSEPHINE."

"Long live the Empress!" cried Ludovic.

Charney kissed the signature and for some moments held the message before his eyes.

BOOK THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

THE commandant of Fenestrella now renewed his attentions to the favorite of Her Majesty the Empress and Queen. Not only Charney was not removed to the bastion cell, but he was allowed to restore the scaffoldings and mattings, more needful than ever to Picciola, who still drooped and hung her head.

Colonel Morand's rage against man and plant was so entirely assuaged that he sent Ludovic every morning to inquire if he could do anything for the prisoner and to ask after Picciola.

Thanks to this friendly feeling, Charney obtained pens, ink, and paper, to set down anew from memory his observations and studies in plant life; for the letter from the Governor of Turin did not cancel the search and capture; the police spies bore off his records on linen, and, after careful examination, declaring that "they were quite unable to find the key to this correspondence," they despatched it all to Paris, to the chief of police, to be deciphered by men more skilful and more expert than they.

Charney suffered another privation, far more important, for its loss was not so readily supplied.

The colonel, to avenge himself on Girhardi for General Menou's reproaches of his want of vigilance, removed the

Italian to another part of the fortress. This separation, which left the old man totally alone, filled Charney with remorse and neutralized the favors which he received.

He spent most of the day with his eyes on the grating and the closed window. He fancied that he still saw the good old man stand there, his arm pushed through the bars in a vain attempt to grasp a friendly hand; he saw his petition to the Emperor drawn up by a string, passing from him to Girhardi, from Girhardi to Teresa, from Teresa to the Empress; and behind those bars there once more shone and beamed that look of pardon and pity which so lately upheld him in his bitterest agony, and he heard that cry of joy from a broken heart when Picciola's pardon came at last!

It is to him, to them that he owes that pardon, and for that rash attempt, by which Charney alone could benefit; they only were punished, cruelly punished! Poor father! poor daughter!

She, too, often appeared to him in the very place where he had once caught a glimpse of her on waking from that painful dream which foretold the death of his plant. On that day, in his confusion and distress, he thought he recognized in her all the features of the Picciola of his dreams, and so he seems to see her now.

As the prisoner cherished these sweet visions, his eyes still bent on the former abode of Girhardi, something moved behind the dim panes; the little window is opened; a woman stands behind the bars. She has a dark, muddy skin, a huge goitre, a cruel, avaricious look in her eyes.

It is Ludovic's wife.

Thenceforth Charney saw no more visions there.

CHAPTER II.

FREED from her shackles, planted in rich earth, with ample space about her, Picciola recovered from her injuries, held up her head, and rose triumphant from all her woes. Still, she had lost all her blossoms save the tiny flower, the last to bloom, at the foot of the stalk.

Now that she had ample space, now that her seeds were swelling and ripening, Charney looked forward to new and splendid discoveries, and even dreamed of the *dies seminalis*, the day for sowing the seed! For he had now abundant garden room; there was more than enough for Picciola; she may become a mother and see her children flourish in her shade!

While awaiting that great day, he is seized with a desire to know the true name of the companion with whom he had passed so many happy moments.

"What! am I never to give Picciola, the poor foundling, the name allotted her by science or by everyday custom, which she bears in common with her sisters of the fields or the mountains?"

Charney mentioned to the colonel, who came to see him, his desire for some work on botany. Although not objecting to this, the colonel, to throw the responsibility upon some one else, wrote to the Governor of Turin for leave to grant the request; and Menou not only granted it at once, but he sent a quantity of books from the Turin library, to help the prisoner in his researches, . . . "hoping," he wrote, "that Her Majesty the Empress and Queen,

herself highly skilled in this branch of knowledge, as in so many others, would be pleased to learn the name of the flower in which she had taken so lively an interest."

Charney smiled when he saw the mass of learning brought him by Ludovic, bending under the load.

"Is such heavy artillery needed," he said, "to force the flower to tell me her name?"

And yet it was with a sense of pleasure that he once more handled a book. He turned the pages with the same thrill of curiosity which he used to feel when knowledge was to him a mysterious and highly desirable thing. The only knowledge which he now craves is that of flowers, that of Nature in her most graceful expression.

"If ever I leave these walls," he thinks, "I will be a botanist!"

Although somewhat appalled by the array of learning before him, he is not discouraged; and in preparation for his search he opens the smallest volume, to see by the index how many names a plant might bear.

How he longed to be free to choose from this calendar of flowers between *Alcea*, *Alisma*, *Andryala*, *Bromelia*, *Celosia*, *Coronilla*, *Euphrasia*, *Helvella*, *Passiflora*, *Primula*, *Santolina*, and other names sweet to the lip, melodious to the ear!

He had a sudden dread that his plant might bear some odd and ugly name, with a masculine or neuter ending, which would have upset all his ideas in regard to his friend and comrade.

What would become of the maiden of his dreams if he had to give her some such title as *Hydrocharis morsus ranæ*, or *Satyrium Nyoscyanus*, or *Gossypium*, *Cynoglossum*

or *Cucubalus*, *Ceuchrus*, *Ruscus* ! or even some name in plain English, more barbarous yet, like rest-harrow, fly-trap, sow-head, crane's-bill, dog's-tooth, mouse-ear, cat-tail, snapdragon, goat's beard, hart's-tongue, or cuckoo-pint ! Would not that be enough to disenchant him forever ? No ! he would not risk such a test !

And yet, in spite of this resolve, he took up each volume in turn, opened it and turned the leaves, lost in wonder at the countless marvels of nature, annoyed by the systematic mind of men, which turned that study, hitherto so attractive to him, into the sternest, most technical, and most confusing of all sciences !

For a whole long week he tried to analyze his plant, so that he might find out its name ; but all in vain. In the midst of his experiments, a thousand times repeated, the tiny flower, the solitary flower, questioned petal by petal, searched to its very calyx, suddenly dropped apart in the hand of the analyzer, the dissector, and fell, bearing with it all his plans for studying the seed, his hopes of seed time, and of future generations of Picciolas !

Charney stood in silent consternation ; then, with a trembling voice and angry glance, addressing the books which lay open on his knee and about him, he exclaimed : " Why should I consult you ? Her name is ' Picciola ! ' Nothing but ' Picciola ! ' the prisoner's plant, his comforter, his friend ! Why should she need another name, and why should I care to know ? Fool ! Is there no cure for this thirst after knowledge, . . . no certain remedy ? "

And with an impulse of wrath, snatching up the books one after the other, he flung them to the ground. A scrap of paper fell from the leaves of one of them and flut-

tered to the floor. Charney caught it up. It contained these words, freshly written, in a woman's hand:

"Hope, and bid thy neighbor hope, for I forget thee not, neither him nor thee !"

(Gospel according to St. Matthew.)

CHAPTER III.

CHARNEY read and reread this note, the meaning of which was unmistakable; for one only among women had been all love and devotion to him, and that woman he had scarcely seen; he had never heard her voice; and had she appeared suddenly before him, he would probably not have recognized her. But how had she eluded the vigilance of his Argus¹-eyed gaolers, how had she managed to transmit these lines to him? "*Bid thy neighbor hope. . .*" Poor girl! she dared not use her father's name. Poor father! he could not even show him this token of his daughter's affection.

As he thought of the good old man, whose cup of bitterness he had filled, and whose grief he was forbidden to soothe, he was pierced with regret, and the sad image of Girhardi was often before him in his sleepless nights.

During one of these wakeful nights he heard an unusual noise over his head, in a cell which had hitherto been vacant, and his mind was filled with conjectures, each more absurd than the other.

Towards morning Ludovic came to his cell with a pre-occupied air, and although he tried to control his features, his eager, shining eyes showed that he had a great piece of news to tell.

¹ Argus was a prince of Argos, a town of ancient Greece (now Planitza); he had a hundred eyes, fifty of which were always open. He was killed by Mercury, and Juno transferred his eyes to the tail of her peacock.

"What is it?" said Charney; "and what was going on upstairs last night?"

"Oh! nothing, *Signor Conte*; nothing, only we took in a fresh lot of prisoners yesterday, and there are no more empty cells. Yes," he went on in a tone bordering on commiseration, "you will have to share the pleasure of your courtyard with a fellow captive; but, never fear, we have none but good people here. . . . When I say good people," he hastily resumed, "I mean there are no thieves among them! But stay, here's the new inmate coming to pay you a visit."

At this unexpected announcement Charney sprang up in surprise, not knowing whether to regret or to rejoice in this change, when Girhardi entered suddenly.

Without a word the two rushed together; their clasped hands bore witness to their joy, and their hearts met in a single glance.

"Well, well," said Ludovic with a laugh, "I see that the ice will be soon broken"; and he left them lost in ecstasy.

After an expressive silence Charney asked: "Who can have united us?"

"My daughter, beyond a doubt! Who else could it be? Does not every pleasure that comes to me come from her?"

Charney bowed his head in confusion, and his hands again grasped those of the old man. Drawing a slip of paper from his dressing case, he handed it to him.

"Do you know that writing?"

"It is hers!" cried Girhardi; "it is my daughter's hand! my Teresa's hand! No, she has not forgotten us,

and her promise is already fulfilled, for we are together. But how did you get this note?"

Charney told him, and then without thinking he made a motion to take back the paper; but seeing Girhardi hold it in his hands trembling with emotion, read it slowly, word by word, letter by letter, and kiss it again and again, he felt that it no longer belonged to him, and he felt a vague sense of regret which he could not explain to himself.

The first few moments passed, when they had exhausted all their conjectures in regard to Teresa, her fate, and her abode, Girhardi, surveying his host's apartment with simple curiosity, paused to read each inscription on the wall.

The newcomer readily believed that it was due to the influence of the plant that two of these maxims had been changed, and he appreciated the importance of the part that she had played to the prisoner. He took up a piece of charcoal in his turn.

One of the maxims contained these words:

"Men dwell upon the earth as later they will lie beneath its surface, side by side, but with no connecting link. To the physical man this world is a crowded arena, where he is continually running into his neighbor; to the spiritual man it is a desert."

He added:

"If he be friendless!"

Then, turning to his companion, he opened his arms to him.

Still moved by the thoughts which had stirred him, his heart throbbing, his eyes moist, Charney fell upon the old

man's neck, and the holy bond of friendship was sealed by a long, close embrace.

Mutual confidences were soon exchanged. They loved each other so well already, although they scarcely knew each other. Charney recounted the ambitious tastes and the vainglorious follies of his youth. The old man in his turn took up the word, and confessed even the errors of his early life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE two prisoners had soon no secrets between them. After rapidly rehearsing the chief events of their life, they went over it in detail, imparting each to the other even the slightest emotions which he had felt.

They talked of Teresa too, but at that name Charney blushed and felt confused; the old man grew thoughtful and a brief silence, sad and solemn, always accompanied the memory of the absent angel.

Nor was Picciola forgotten amidst their effusions. The two friends had built a larger, more convenient bench close beside her. Here they sat together before the plant, and they felt that there was a third party to the conversation. They called this bench the *lecturer's bench*, for there the teacher and his pupil sat: the teacher was the one who knew the least, but knew the best; the teacher was Girhardi; the pupil was Charney; and Picciola was the book.

Autumn was at hand; they sat in their accustomed place; Charney, losing all hope that Picciola would blossom again, expressed his regret to his friend that the last flower should have fallen, and Girhardi, to atone for this loss, detailed to him the general features of the fructification of plants.

He told him how water plants, the ornament of rivulets and lakes, assume a form for their seeds which permits them to float on the water, so that they may take root on the slopes of the river bank or on either shore; how, when their weight draws them down, it is in order that

they may grow in the bed of the stream or the rich soil of the swamp; how, failing seeds, they multiply by means of roots and cuttings. All these and many other wonders of the vegetable world he unfolded to Charney's attentive ear.

"What!" cried Charney, "such things exist, and the majority of men do not condescend to turn their gaze that way!"

This was but one of the old man's lessons.

"My friend," said Charney as they sat together on their bench, "can the insects which you have made your favorite study, show you as many marvels as Picciola has revealed to me?"

"Quite as many," was the reply. "Believe me, you will never fully appreciate your Picciola until you learn to know those lively little creatures which buzz and hum about her. Then only you will see the varied relations, the secret laws which connect the insect and the plant, and link both plant and insect with the rest of the world; for all are born of the same Will, all are governed by the same Intelligence!"

As Girhardi spoke he suddenly paused, his eyes fixed on Picciola.

A gay-colored butterfly rested on one of her branches, its wings quivering with a peculiar motion.

"What is it, friend?"

"I think," said the master, "that Picciola will help me to answer your first question. Watch that butterfly. While I speak it has compelled your plant to seal a compact. Yes, for it has deposited the hope of its posterity upon one of her branches."

Charney bent to verify the statement. The butterfly flew off, leaving its eggs covered with a sticky substance which bound them securely to the bark.

"Well!" added Girhardi, "was it by chance, by mere accident, that the butterfly confided her precious deposit to Picciola's care? Beware of the thought! Nature reserves a particular species of plant for each kind of insect. Every plant has its guest to feed and lodge. Now, see how striking that butterfly's action is. It was first a caterpillar, and while a caterpillar it fed upon the substance of a plant like this; later on it went through its various changes; faithless to its first affections, it roved from flower to flower. But when the time came to lay its eggs, this little creature, that never knew a mother, and will never see its children (for its work is done and it must die), untaught by experience, therefore, it confides its eggs to a plant like that upon which it fed itself in another form and at a different season. It knows that tiny caterpillars will come forth from its eggs, and for them it forgets its roving butterfly habits. Who taught it these things? Who endowed it with memory, reason, and power to recognize that plant whose leaves are now quite unlike what they were in the spring? The wisest eyes may be mistaken in such matters; but the insect never makes a mistake!"

Charney was about to express his surprise.

"Oh! this is not all," Girhardi broke in. "Look at the branch which it has chosen. It is one of the oldest and strongest; for the new shoots, weak and frail, might be frozen or broken by the blasts of winter. This, too, the little creature knows. Once more I ask you, who taught it this?"

Charney was confounded.

"Forgive me," he said; "I fear you may be carried away by some system, by some prejudice."

"Silence, sceptic," cried the old man with one of his subtle smiles. "Perhaps you will believe your own eyes! Mark me well, Picciola will play her part in her turn! Next spring we can verify the miracle together," he said, restraining a sigh at the thought of his daughter. "Then, when Picciola's first leaves come forth, the little worms in the eggs will break their shells. No doubt you know that the buds of various shrubs do not all open at the same time; the same is the case with the eggs of the various species of butterflies; but here a law of unity governs the growth of plant and insect alike. If the worms came out before the leaves, they would have nothing to eat; if the leaves came forward before the baby caterpillars, the latter would be unable to devour them with their delicate mandibles. This could never be; Nature never errs! Every plant in its progress follows the development of the insect which it is destined to feed; the one opens her buds when the eggs of the other open; and having grown and strengthened together, they unfold their flowers and their wings together!"

"Picciola! Picciola!" whispered Charney, "you did not tell me all!"

Thus each day brought its own lesson; at night the captives returned, each to his own cell, to await the coming of sleep or to think, unknown to each other, of one and the same object — of the old man's daughter. What had befallen her since she was exiled from her father's prison?

Teresa had first followed the Emperor to Milan ; but there she soon found by experience that it is sometimes easier to traverse an army than an antechamber. However, Girhardi's friends, spurred on by her, renewed their efforts, promised to obtain his pardon ere long ; and Teresa, more at ease, returned to Turin, where a relative had offered her a home.

This relative's husband was city librarian. To him Menou intrusted the choice of books to be sent to Fenestrella. The nature of these books led Teresa to guess for whom they were intended. Hence the insertion of that little note whose mystical form could not injure either her father or his friend.

At that time she did not know that the two were separated ; and when the news reached her through the messenger who carried the books, alarmed at the results of total solitude upon the old man, her heart was full of one desire only — the reunion of the two captives !

Some time later, being presented to the wife of General Menou, she thanked her and expressed her deep gratitude, when the old general, touched by her filial devotion, departed for an instant from his usual harshness, took her hand affectionately in his, and said :

"Come to see me now and then, or rather come to see my wife. Perhaps within a month she may have some good news for you !"

Teresa supposed that she was to be allowed to return to Fenestrella, to spend part of her time with her father ; she threw herself at the general's feet and thanked him again and again, her face radiant with joy !

CHAPTER V.

ON a fine sunny day in October, one of those days which remind one of spring, Girhardi and Charney were seated on their bench. Both silent and thoughtful, they seemed to pay no heed each to the other, but the Count's eye, filled with interest and anxiety, turned ever and anon to his companion, wholly absorbed in deep revery. Girhardi's features seldom wore the look of gloom. Charney might well mistake its cause.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, suddenly breaking the long silence; "captivity is horrible! horrible! when it is undeserved! To live apart from the one we love can scarcely be called living!"

Girhardi looked up, and in his turn casting off his pensive mood:

"Separation is the great trial of life; is it not, my friend?"

"Your friend!" replied the Count; "can you indeed call me your friend? Was it not I who parted you from her? Can you ever forget it? Ah! do not deny it; you were thinking of your daughter, and as you thought of her you must needs turn from me! I understand that when such thoughts come to you, the sight of me must be hateful to you!"

"You are strangely mistaken as to the cause of my meditation," said the old man. "Perhaps my thoughts of my daughter were never more soothing than to-day, for she has written to me, and I have her letter!"

"Is it possible? She has written to you? And it was allowed!"

Charney moved towards the happy father with an impulse of delight at once restrained: "But did her letter bring you bad news?"

"Not at all; . . . on the contrary."

"Then why so sad?"

"Alas! How can I tell, my friend? Man is so constituted. Regret is always mingled with our fairest hopes! Our earthly pleasures always cast their shadow before them, and our eye falls first upon that shadow! You spoke of separation! . . . here, take this letter; read it and you will guess why this morning a sense of sadness overcame me as I sat beside you."

Charney took the letter and for some time held it unopened. His eyes upon Girhardi, he seemed trying to read its contents in his dear companion's face; then he studied the address and was pleasantly stirred by the well-known hand. At last, unfolding the sheet, he tried to read it aloud; but his voice shook, the words parched his lips as he uttered them; he stopped short, and finished the letter to himself. It read as follows:

"DEAR FATHER, —

"Kiss the letter which you now hold in your hands over and over; I have kissed it again and again, and it contains a whole harvest of kisses for you!"

"Oh! be sure I did so," murmured Girhardi. . . .

"Dear girl!"

Charney went on:

"It is a great delight to you, as well as to me, is it not,

that we are at last allowed to correspond? We must be eternally grateful to General Menou. For it is he who has put an end to the silence which parted us even more effectually than distance. Blessings on his head! Henceforth our thoughts at least may meet; I shall tell you my hopes and they will cheer and comfort you; you will tell me your griefs, and while I weep for them I shall feel that I weep with you! But, dear father, what if a greater favor still were in store for us? . . . Oh! I implore you, lay down this letter for a few moments and, before you read farther, prepare your soul for the sudden joys which I have yet to tell you! . . . Father, what if I were permitted to rejoin you! . . . to see you from time to time, to hear your voice, to watch over you! For two years those pleasures were all I asked, and captivity appeared a slight thing to you! Well! if my hope be realized, . . . I shall soon return to that prison from which I was exiled!"

"She is coming back! What! here! To be with you?" Charney broke in with a rapturous cry.

"Read, read," was the sad reply.

Charney re-read the last sentence and continued:

"I shall soon return to that prison from which I was exiled! . . . You are happy now, very happy, I know. Dwell a little longer upon that comforting idea. . . . Your daughter, your Teresa, entreats you! do not be too eager to reach the end of this letter. Too great an emotion is sometimes dangerous! Is not what I have told you enough? Had an angel come down from heaven to grant your wishes, you would not have ventured to ask for more. . . . I, more exacting perhaps, before he took his flight, should plead with him for your liberty, for your

complete delivery! At your age it is so hard to be deprived of the sight of your native land! The banks of the Doria are so fair, and the trees planted in your garden by my dead mother and my poor brother have grown so much! There their memory is more vivid than elsewhere! Then you must regret your friends, your friends whose generous efforts have done so much to aid my feeble attempts. . . . Oh! father, father, the pen burns my fingers; my secret will escape. It has already escaped, no doubt! I beseech you, be strong, for happiness is at hand! In a few days I shall join you, not alone to soothe your captivity but to put an end to it! Not to spend a few hours with you within prison walls, but to lead you forth free and unabashed! Yes, unabashed! You well may be unabashed; for your faithful Delarue and Cotenna have obtained, not your pardon, but justice, full reparation!

"Farewell, dearest father; oh! how I love you, and how happy I am!

TERESA."

There was not a word, a single word of remembrance for Charney in the letter. He anxiously sought for one such word as he read; and yet, in spite of his disappointment at not finding it, his first outburst was one of rapture.

"You will be free!" he cried; "and you can lie in the shade of green trees and see the sun rise!"

"Yes," said the old man, "I shall; . . . I shall leave you! And this is the cloud which darkens my happiness and almost hides it!"

"What does that matter?" rejoined Charney, proving by the vehemence of his transports and his generous

forgetfulness of self how worthy he had become to understand what friendship was: "You will be restored to her at last! She will cease to suffer for my fault; you will be happy, and I shall no longer feel this weight upon my soul! For the short space yet left us to talk together we can at least talk of her!"

The last words were uttered in the arms of his old friend!

CHAPTER VI.

CHARNEY'S blood now flowed more calmly; his thoughts were gentler, more soothing, more affectionate. Like the wise Piedmontese, he felt a vague desire to open his heart to affection. He dreamed with ecstasy of the beings whom, by a tie of gratitude or friendship, he might bind to him.

Among them Josephine, Girhardi, and Ludovic first presented themselves to people his celestial world; then two feminine shades appeared at either end of that rainbow of love which came after the storm. One of these shadows was the fairy of his dreams, Picciola the maiden, the fair image born of the perfumes of his flower; the other the angel of his prison, his second providence, Teresa Girhardi.

By a strange contrast the former, who only existed for him as an ideal being, was yet the only one to stand out distinctly in his memory. He could see her frown slightly, her eye brighten, her mouth smile. Such as he saw her in a vision, such he could always see her. As for Teresa, never having noticed her particularly, under what form could he portray her? Her face was veiled; and if he strove to lift the veil, it was still Picciola's face which appeared before him — Picciola, suddenly made manifold, do what he would, as if to receive the homage meant for her rival.

One morning the prisoner, wide awake, thought himself the victim of this singular delusion.

Day was breaking ; he had already dressed and was thinking of Girhardi. The latter, feeling that his delivery was at hand, had accompanied his good-night with such touching expressions of regret that the Count could not sleep all night, the idea of the parting pained him so much. As he paced his cell he mechanically turned his eyes towards the bench, where, the night before, he had talked with the father, of the daughter, when in the prison yard, upon that self-same bench, through a thin autumn mist, he suddenly saw a young woman seated. She was alone and, in a graceful attitude, seemed to be gazing at the plant.

Charney instantly thought of Teresa, of her arrival.

"It is she!" he said to himself; "and I shall see her for a moment, never to see her again! and my old friend will go with her!"

As he spoke the young woman turned her head his way; and the face which he then saw was once more, again and always, that of Picciola!

He put his hand to his head in amazement, rubbed his eyes, touched his clothes, the cold bars of his window, to assure himself that it was now no dream.

The young woman rose, moved towards him, and, smiling and blushing, greeted him with a shy bow. Charney returned neither the bow nor the smile; he stared at the graceful figure as it moved through the mist; it was indeed the same that he had seen at the entertainments given him by Picciola; those were the features which haunted his dreams and his waking thoughts. Believing himself a prey to feverish delirium, he threw himself on his bed to recover his senses.

A few minutes later the door opened and Ludovic entered.

"*Ohimè! ohimè!*"¹ good and bad news both, *Signor Conte!*" he exclaimed; "one of my birds is about to fly away, not over the walls, but out at the door. So much the better for him, so much the worse for you!"

"What! is it to be to-day then?"

"I think not, *Signor Conte*. But it can't be long, for the paper has been signed at Paris, I hear, and it is on its way to Turin. At least so the *giovanna*² told her father just now."

"What!" cried Charney, sitting up, "has she come? Is she here?"

"She reached Fenestrella last night with a permit, in regular form, to enter. Unfortunately, the rules do not allow of my lowering the drawbridge for a woman at so late an hour; she had to put off her visit till to-day. I knew she was here; but *cap de Dious!* I took care not to let the poor old fellow know; he would not have slept a wink, and the time would have seemed unending, if he had known that his daughter was so near him! She was up this morning before the sun and came here at dawn, to wait in all the fog at the gates of the fortress, good creature that she is!"

"But," broke in Charney, confused and amazed, "did she not spend some time in the courtyard seated on that bench?"

And he sprang to the window, looked eagerly into the court, and again turning to Ludovic:

"She is no longer there!" he said.

¹ Alas! alas!

² Young lady.

"Of course she is not there now, but she was there," was the reply. "Yes, she waited there while I went up to prepare the good man for her visit, lest he should die of joy. Joy, it seems, is like strong drink; a little drop now and again is excellent, but it is bad to empty the bottle at a single draught. Now they are together, very happy, both of them; and when I saw them so happy, *per Bacco*, I thought of you, *Signor Conte*, of you, who will soon be left alone; and I came in to remind you that you will still have Ludovic and Picciola too. She is beginning to lose her leaves, but that is owing to the season; you must not despise her for that."

And he left the room without waiting for Charney's answer.

The latter, not yet recovered from his surprise and emotion, tried to explain his strange vision; he at last began to think that the sweet features worn by Picciola the maiden might really have been only those of Teresa, once seen by him at the grated window, and her image doubtless unconsciously repeated in his dreams.

As he reasoned thus, the hum of voices reached his ear; he heard upon the stairs, together with the familiar steps of the old man, a light tread which hardly touched the stone. The sounds soon stopped at his door. He trembled; but Girhardi alone appeared.

"She is here," he said, "and she is waiting for us beside the plant."

Charney silently followed him, unable to utter a word, his heart filled with uneasiness rather than with pleasure.

Was it embarrassment at appearing before the woman to whom he owed everything, and whom he could never

hope to repay? Did he remember how he had received her bow and smile that very morning? Now that the parting was so near, did his courage and his resignation fail him?

Whether owing to these causes or to many others as well, when he stood before her no one would have recognized the brilliant Count de Charney by his manners and his language; the polished ease of the man of the world, the composure of the philosopher gave way to a stammering voice and awkward mien, to which no doubt were due the coldness and reserve shown by Teresa.

Notwithstanding all Girhardi's efforts to establish friendly relations between his daughter and his fellow captive, the conversation at first turned only upon commonplaces. Recovering from his first confusion, Charney read nothing but indifference on Teresa's calm features, and readily persuaded himself that in rendering him such service she had merely obeyed the dictates of her adventurous nature or the orders of her father.

He almost regretted seeing her; for should he ever regain his former delight in thinking of her?

As they all three sat on the bench, Girhardi, absorbed in gazing at his daughter, and Charney, uttering a few cold and broken phrases, Teresa made a motion towards her father, and a large locket, hanging from her neck and hidden in the folds of her dress, fell out. Charney could not help seeing in it, on one side the white hair of an old man, on the other a faded flower, carefully preserved under the glass. It was the flower which he sent her by Ludovic.

What! she had kept that flower, preserved, placed it

as a precious relic with the hair of her idolized father! Picciola's flower no longer gleamed from the maiden's hair; it rested on her heart!

This sight completely changed Charney's feelings.

He again began to consider Teresa, as if she had been transformed before his eyes, and he hoped to discover in her that which had not previously appeared. Indeed, her face, turned to the old man, was radiant with a double expression of tenderness and serenity; she was beautiful, as Raphael's Madonnas are beautiful, as pure and loving souls are beautiful! He was lost in admiration! It was so long since he had seen a human face so resplendent with the radiance of youth, beauty, and goodness! After gazing long at the lovely girl, his eyes again turned eagerly to the locket.

"Then you did not scorn my poor gift?" he murmured.

Low as was his whisper, Teresa turned quickly towards him; her first impulse was to replace the trinket; but, in her turn, she studied the change which had taken place in the Count's face, and both blushed at once.

"What is the matter, my child?" asked Girhardi, seeing her confusion.

"Nothing," said she; and at once correcting herself, as if she feared to deny even to herself a pure and honorable emotion: "We were speaking of this locket. . . . Look, father, this is your hair." Then, turning to Charney: "See, sir, this is the flower which you sent me, and which I have kept, . . . which I shall always keep!"

There was such frankness and modesty in her words, in her tone, in the instinct which led her to address her explanation to her father as well as to the stranger, that

Charney felt a thrill of rapture such as he had never before experienced.

The rest of the day was spent in the effusions of a friendship which seemed to grow with every moment that passed.

Charney and Teresa had never before spoken to each other ; but they had thought of each other so much, and so few hours were yet left to them ! Accordingly, when Charney, out of good breeding, offered to leave them lest the presence of a stranger might annoy them, Teresa exclaimed :

"Why should you leave us ?" holding him by a look, while Girhardi detained him by a gesture. "You are no stranger to my father . . . or to me !" she added in an enchanting tone of reproach.

To show him how little his presence disturbed them, she began to tell all that had happened since she left Fenestrella, and what means she had taken to reunite the two prisoners. When her story was ended she begged Charney to begin his tale, and to tell her how he spent his days and of his tasks for Picciola.

Girhardi, seated between the two, holding in one hand the hand of the daughter just restored to him, and in the other that of the friend he was about to leave, listened, and looked at each in turn with a mixture of joy and sorrow. But now and then the old man's hands met, and by the same movement those of Charney and Teresa. Then the young people, agitated and embarrassed, would cease talking. At last the young girl, without any appearance of prudery or affectation, gently freed her hand, and laying it on her father's shoulder, and resting her head

on it in a graceful attitude, turned, smiling, to Charney as if to beg him to go on.

Encouraged, carried away by so much favor and freedom from restraint, he ventured to relate his visions of his plant. As I have said, they were the great events of his life during his solitude. He described the enchanting maiden in whom Picciola was personified, and as he eagerly, lovingly sketched her likeness, Teresa's face gradually lost its smile and she sighed as she listened.

The narrator took care not to mention the original of the sweet image; but as he closed the story and the woes of his plant, he recalled the instant when, by the colonel's order, the dying Picciola was about to be torn from the earth before his very eyes.

"Poor Picciola!" exclaimed Teresa with tears in her eyes; "oh! you belong to me too, dear little creature! for I had a share in your rescue."

And Charney, overwhelmed with joy, thanked her in his heart for this adoption, which established a sacred bond between them.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARNEY would gladly and forever have renounced freedom, fortune, and society if his days might be passed like this one, in a prison with Teresa and her father. He loved this girl as he had never loved before. This emotion, hitherto a stranger to his soul, now entered there at once violent and sweet, bitter and savory, like some sour fruit which perfumes whilst it makes the lips smart. He felt an unknown ecstasy, outbursts of affection which embraced God, humanity, and the whole universe.

Next day the three were again seated in the courtyard beside the plant, — the two friends on the bench, Teresa facing them, on a chair which Ludovic had considerably provided.

She was busy with needlework, and with a lively expression of satisfaction, following the motion of her needle with her head, lifting her eyes as she raised her hand, she smiled now at her father and now at Charney, interrupting their grave discourse with an occasional frivolous remark. Then she rose, and regardless of the fact that she was breaking in upon their conversation, she clasped her father in her arms and kissed him.

The conversation, thus cut short, was not resumed. Charney sank into a deep revery.

"Does Teresa love him?" He dreads to think so; he shudders to doubt it!

She has kept the flower which he gave her, and has promised to keep it forever; she was confused when their

hands met the day before in the old man's lap ; she sighed at the story of his visions ; but the words which she uttered in so tender a voice were spoken in her father's presence. How shall he interpret all these charming sighs ; as proof of pity, interest, or devotion ? Did she not give proofs of these before that interview, when their eyes had never met, when as yet they had never exchanged a word ? Mad fool ! Mad fool ! To dream that he has so soon found a place in that heart wholly occupied by filial affection !

What matter ? He loves her ; he will always love her, and will take this angelic reality in place of the ideal image which no longer satisfies him.

He will keep his love hidden ; to try to win a return would be a crime. Why should he poison her happy future ? Are they not fated to dwell apart ? She joyous and free in a world where ere long she will choose a husband ; he alone in his prison, alone with Picciola and the memory of a brief moment !

His mind is made up ; from this day, from this moment, he will affect indifference to Teresa, or at least he will cloak himself in a false semblance of calm, quiet friendship. Woe to him, woe to them both, if she should love him !

Full of these fine schemes, his ear was caught by a few sentences interchanged by Girhardi and his daughter. The old man asserted that the year would probably end before his captivity.

"If you really think so," said his daughter, "I will return to Turin to-morrow to hasten the fulfilment of the promises which your friends made me."

"Why should we be in such haste?" replied Girhardi.

"What! Do you prefer your dark, narrow cell and this ugly courtyard to your own home and your lovely gardens?"

Teresa's apparent impatience to leave Fenestrella should have pleased Charney as showing that she did not love him, and that the danger which he dreaded for her was by no means imminent; but, on the contrary, he was so disturbed as quite to forget the part he intended to play. He could not help showing his distress; but Teresa took no other notice of this than to tease him about his silence and his sulky look; and she again began to argue that, if the pardon were delayed much longer, she must go at once to General Menou; if need be, to Paris, to the Emperor!

She, usually so yielding, so reserved, seemed suddenly governed by an incomprehensible desire to laugh and chatter.

"What ails you to-day?" asked her father, amazed to see her make so merry in the presence of the poor captive whom they were soon to leave behind them.

Charney did not know what to think of her.

The truth is that Teresa, too, had followed the same train of thought as Charney. She did not feel the approach of love; she knew that it had already filled her soul long since. Like Charney, she was ready to accept it for herself, with all its risks and dangers; but, like him also, she dreaded it for another! And the joy of loving, the fear lest she should be loved, caused these apparent contradictions and the flow of words with which she tried to still her heart.

Soon all these efforts, all this attempt to hide their true feelings, came to an end on both sides. Listening to Girhardi, as he told them how often he had known prisoners whose pardon had been publicly announced, to wait for months before they were set free, they were only too happy to yield to his persuasions ; they would gladly have learned that henceforth and forever this prison was to be their abode ; that living there with their guardian angel, the only thing the prisoners had to fear was that one of them might be set free !

A faint sunbeam lit up Teresa's face ; the wind ruffled her ribbons, and laying aside her work for an instant, she seemed to drink in at the same time light, air, and happiness, when all at once the door to the courtyard opened.

Colonel Morand, followed by an officer and by Ludovic, came to tell Girhardi that he was free. He was to quit the fortress at once ; a carriage was waiting to take him and his daughter to Turin !

On the colonel's entrance Teresa rose ; she fell back into her chair, and with a glance at Charney, her color and her bright smile faded. Charney himself, still seated on the bench, kept his head down, while Girhardi listened to the reading of his pardon.

The preparations for departure were very brief.

Ludovic had already brought the old man's trunk from his room. The officer was ready to escort him to Turin.

The parting hour had come.

Teresa rose once more and seemed absorbed in putting her embroidery into her bag, in arranging her neck kerchief ; then she tried to put on her gloves ; . . . she could not manage it.

Charney, arming himself with courage, approached Girhardi, opened his arms and said, "Farewell, father!"

"My son! My dear son!" faltered his old friend. . . .
"Keep up your courage! Count on us. . . . Farewell! Farewell!"

He held him in a long, close embrace, and then, turning to Ludovic, the better to hide his emotion, he gave him a few last unnecessary charges in regard to the comrade who was to be left behind. Ludovic made no reply, but he offered his arm to the old man, for he needed a support.

Meantime Charney went up to Teresa to take leave of her also. Her hand on the back of her chair, her eyes on the ground, she seemed lost in thought, as if she never meant to leave the spot. When she saw Charney by her side, waking from her reverie, she surveyed him for a time in silence. He was pale and agitated and could not speak. Suddenly the young girl, forgetting her resolves, pointed to the prisoner's plant:

"I take our Picciola to witness," . . . she said.

She could say no more.

One of her silk gloves which she held in her hand fell; Charney picked it up, kissed and returned it to her without a word.

Teresa took the glove, used it to dry the tears which flowed freely from her eyes, and giving it back to Charney with one last smile, she cried, "We shall meet again!" and drew her father away.

They were gone, the gate had long since closed between them and him, but Charney still stood as if turned to stone, convulsively pressing Teresa's little glove to his heart.

CONCLUSION.

SOME philosopher has said that greatness is never appreciated until it has ceased to exist ; he might have said the same of health, pleasure, and all those enjoyments to which the soul so soon becomes accustomed.

Never had the prisoner so fully appreciated Girhardi's wisdom, his daughter's virtues and charms, as now that his two guests had left him. Deep depression followed the ecstasy of a day. All Ludovic's efforts, the cares required by Picciola, no longer sufficed to divert him ; but the seeds of strength and reformation sowed by his dear studies bore fruit at last, and the downcast man rose once more.

His soul was perfected by strife. At first he blessed his solitude, which allowed him to spend uninterrupted hours in thought of his absent friends ; later on he was glad to see some one take the old man's vacant seat on the bench.

The first and most frequent of his visitors was the chaplain of the prison, the good priest, once so rudely repulsed. Informed by Ludovic of the prisoner's gloom, he hastened, forgetful of the past, to offer his consolations, and they were received with gratitude.

Better inclined towards mankind, Charney soon learned to like this man, and the rustic seat once more became the lecture bench.

The philosopher praised the marvels of his plant, those of Nature, and rehearsed old Girhardi's lessons ; the priest,

without entering upon the discussion of dogma, told the sublime story of Christ, and each upheld the other.

The next visitor was Colonel Morand. On better acquaintance he proved a good fellow; he had a soldier's heart; he never tormented his people except by order; he almost reconciled Charney to petty tyrants.

At last the day came for Charney to say good-bye to both priest and colonel. When he least expected it his prison doors were thrown open!

On his return from Austerlitz, Napoleon, urged by Josephine, who perhaps was urged by some one else interceding for the prisoner of Fenestrella, inquired into the search made of Charney's effects.

The handkerchief manuscripts were laid before the Emperor, having thus far remained in the archives of the State department; he looked them over carefully, and loudly declared that Count Charney was a fool, but a very harmless fool.

"A man who thus subjects his thought to a blade of grass," said he, "may make a very good botanist, but no conspirator. I grant his pardon; let his estates be restored to him, and let him till his own land, if such be his pleasure!"

So Charney too was to leave Fenestrella! but he did not go alone. How could he leave his first, his faithful friend? Transplanting her into a large box, well filled with rich earth, he triumphantly bore away with him his Picciola! Picciola, to whom he owed his reason; Picciola, who saved his life; Picciola, in whose bosom he found his healing faith; Picciola, who taught him to know friendship and even love; Picciola, who had set him free!

As he was about to cross the drawbridge, a broad, hard hand was suddenly stretched out.

"*Signor Conte*," said Ludovic, struggling with his emotion, "give me your hand; we can be friends now, since you are going away; since you are to leave us, since we shall never meet again! . . . Thank God!"

Charney would not let him finish. "We shall meet again, dear Ludovic! Ludovic, my friend!"

And embracing him, pressing his hand repeatedly, he left the fortress.

He had crossed the parade, left behind him the hill on which the fortress stands, crossed the bridge that spans the Clusone, and had already turned into the Suza road, when a voice was heard calling from the top of the ramparts:

"Good-bye, *Signor Conte*! Good-bye, Picciola!"

A year later, on a bright spring day, a handsome carriage drew up in front of the prison at Fenestrella. A traveller stepped out and asked for Ludovic Ritti.

It was the former captive come to visit his friend the gaoler. A lady leaned affectionately upon the traveller's arm.

The lady was Teresa Girhardi, Countess of Charney.

Together they visited the courtyard and the cell once occupied by weariness, unbelief, and disillusion! Of all the despairing maxims once traced on the white walls but one remained:

"*Knowledge, beauty, youth, fortune, all, here on earth, are powerless to confer happiness.*"

Teresa added: "*Without love.*"

A kiss, which Charney imprinted on her cheek, confirmed what she had written.

The Count begged Ludovic to stand godfather to his first child, as he had to Picciola. Their errand accomplished, the husband and wife returned to Turin, where Girhardi awaited them in his beautiful home.

In her own special bed, warmed and lighted by the rays of the rising sun, Charney had planted his flower, which no other hand was to disturb. By his orders, he alone was to care for her, attend to her wants. It was an occupation, a duty, a debt, required of his gratitude.

How quickly the days passed! Surrounded by vast gardens, on the banks of a noble river, under a blue sky, Charney enjoyed the life of the fortunate ones of this earth. Time added a new charm, a new force to all his bonds; for custom, like the ivy on our walls, strengthens and binds that which it cannot destroy. Girhardi's friendship, Teresa's love, the blessings of all beneath his roof, nothing was wanting to his happiness, and the moment came when even this happiness increased. Charney was a father!

Oh! then his heart overflowed with felicity! His love for his daughter seemed to redouble that which he bore his wife. He never tired of gazing at them, of adoring them both. It was torture to be parted from them for an instant!

Just at this time Ludovic came in fulfilment of his promise; his first thought was to visit his first god-daughter—the child of the prison. But, alas! amidst these outbursts of love, amidst the prosperity which filled the home, the source of all these joys, of all this happiness, poor Picciola, was dead, . . . dead for want of care!

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